



# Mission Sparks

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## "MULTICULTURAL/ MULTIETHNIC CHURCH: (IM)POSSIBLE DREAM?"





# Mission Sparks

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## TABLE OF CONTENT

a) EDITORIAL NOTE-MISSION SPARK 10, “MULTICULTURAL/ MULTIETHNIC CHURCH: (IM)POSSIBLE DREAM?” (Dr. Dyah Ayu Krismawati).....	4-6
b) MULTICULTURALISM AND PLURALISM IN OUR CO-EXISTENCE: SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES ON IMPACT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY ON INTERRELIGIOUS LIFE (Dr. J. Mardimin) .....	7-24
c) MULTIKULTURALISME DAN PLURALISME DALAM KEHIDUPAN- BERSAMA KITA: KAJIAN SOSIOLOGIS TENTANG DAMPAK KEBERAGAMAN BUDAYA TERHADAP KEHIDUPAN ANTARUMAT BERAGAMA (Dr. J. Mardimin) .....	25-44
d) INTERCULTURALISM IN A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE AND THE REALITY OF THE CHURCH IN THE CONTEXT OF GKI IN PAPUA (Dr. Martha M. Wospakrik, M.Th and Kristensia Notanubun, M.Th)	45-57
e) INTERKULTURAL DALAM PERSPEKTIF BIBLIS DAN REALITA BERGEREJA DALAM KONTEKS GKI DI TANAH PAPUA (Dr. Martha M. Wospakrik, M.Th and Kristensia Notanubun, M.Th)	59-72
f) GKE: REFLECTION OF AN ETHNIC-TERRITORIAL CHURCH BECOMING NATIONALIST-ECUMENICAL (Kinurung Maleh, D.Th)	73-88
g) GKE: REFLEKSI GEREJA ETNISITAS-TERITORIAL MENJADI NASIONALIS-EKUMENIS (Kinurung Maleh, D.Th).....	89-104
h) THE CONTEXTUAL DILEMMA OF EMPHASIZING IDENTITY IN HETEROGENEOUS CHURCHES AND COMMUNITIES IN INDONESIA (Dr. Uwe Hummel) .....	105-114
i) ECCLESIOLOGY IN THE MIDST OF DIGITALIZATION AND A MODEL OF GLOBAL DIGITAL CHURCH (Dr. Marthe Maleke Kondemo).....	115-132
j) GLOBAL LEARNING AS ECUMENICAL PRAXIS NO MORE “WE HERE AND THEY THERE! (Lusungu Mbilinyi, Angelika Vedeler, and Dr. Andar Parlindungan) .....	133-143

## **EDITORIAL NOTE-MISSION SPARK 10**

### **“Multicultural/Multiethnic Church: (Im)possible Dream?”**

The rapid urbanization, migration and globalization are some factors which shape diverse society. As part of society, church is affected by the changing context and pluralistic circumstances which can be considered as strength or threat for the live of churches. Many questions raised on how to organize and live pluralistic circumstances, on how the intercultural elements and changing era influence the dynamics of the church; what would the church should do and what would be the foundation for it. In regards to these questions, this 10<sup>th</sup> edition of Mission Spark brings the theme: “Multicultural/multiethnic church: (Im)possible dream?” into discussion.

J. Mardimin started by emphasizing the need to understand the term pluralism and multiculturalism. According to him, these two ideologies are important for the pluralistic society with various ethnicities, races, religions, and customs. Although pluralism and multiculturalism have their respective advantages and disadvantages, both are unavoidably important to create a pluralistic and multicultural society which is harmonious, peaceful, just and prosperous.

In regards to churches, two female theologians of Gereja Kristen Indonesia di Tanah Papua (GKI-TP), Martha M. Wospakrik and Kristensia Notanubun explained that identifying and accepting

diversity is important narratives of the Bible, both the Old Testament and the New Testament. It should become the foundation for a church and Christian to embrace diversity. They give GKI-TP as an example in which GKI-TP understands herself as a church for all ethnicities and nations while continuing to maintain themselves establish only in the land of Papua. By doing so, they believe GKI-TP keeps their strength, identity and commitment.

A different context is written by Kinurung Maleh on describing the Gereja Kalimantan Evangelis (GKE). Kinurung Maleh criticized the ecumenical commitment of other churches which were considered not positive in building the unity of the church in Kalimantan since many churches from other islands are continuing to expand and plant churches in Kalimantan without considering the existence of GKE. Therefore, it is not avoidable that GKE also establish outside Kalimantan, especially in Jakarta as many church members of GKE migrated there and the wider possibility of relations may occur. This decision is taken based on the GKE identity as nationalist-ecumenical church. However, there is an open question on how the plan to move the capital city of Indonesia to Kalimantan will influence GKE in the future.

What was conveyed by the authors from GKI-TP and GKE is a picture of the various understanding on ecumenical thought on realizing the migration and urbanization which challenge the territorial church. Uwe Hummel explained very interestingly on how churches are facing “contextual dilemma”. Opening up to diversity could lead to a loss of identity, but closing oneself to diversity and differences will hamper the church growing. According to him, authenticity and openness are two important factors which churches in Indonesia should continue to discuss and pay attention to.

Globalization affects global communication and creates intercultural communication. It boost the development of communication and information technology (CIT) and vice-versa. The development of CIT transforms societies, including churches. Based on the current context of digital era, Marthe Maleke Kondemo, described the challenges which are facing by churches concerning the development of CIT. According to her, churches should pay attention to its ecclesiological issues because the church is migrating from traditional faith practices to the digital environment. The church members in both online and onsite should be well served and take care of.

Globalization, multiculturalism and diversity have also led UEM to develop “Global Learning in Ecumenical Perspective (GLEP)” concept and praxis which are applicable in various fields of UEM work. How UEM GLEP is in the field of education, three Authors: Angelika Veddelar, Andar Parlindungan, and Lusungu Mbilinyi give their views.

Enjoy reading!!

Rev. Dr. Dyah Ayu Krismawati

**Executive Secretary of UEM Asia Department  
and Chief Editor**

# MULTICULTURALISM AND PLURALISM IN OUR CO-EXISTENCE: SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES ON IMPACT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY ON INTERRELIGIOUS LIFE

*J. Mardimin*<sup>1</sup>

*Séjé silit séjé anggit; Désa mawa cara; Négara mawa tata.*<sup>2</sup>  
(Anonim)

*Bhinneka tunggal ika. Tan hana dharma mangrwa.*<sup>3</sup>  
(Sutasoma, Mpu Tantular,<sup>4</sup> abad ke-14)

## ABSTRACT

In this earth, there are countries in which many different ethnicities, races, customs, beliefs and various complexities cultures live. Generally, in such a state community, there are always primordial tensions and social conflicts. This is because, in a plural and

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<sup>1</sup> J. Mardimin, Lecturer in the Postgraduate Program in Development Studies, Faculty of Inter-Discipline, Satya Wacana Christian University and Consultant for Planning and Evaluation Program for several Institutional in Indonesia and abroad.

<sup>2</sup> If freely translated, the proverb more or less means: "Different people have different opinions, each village has its own customs [procedures], [and] each country has its own laws."

<sup>3</sup> Mpu Tantular in the Sutasoma Book which was written during the Majapahit Kingdom under the rule of King Hayam Wuruk. If literally translated, the proverb more or less means: "be separated, but one as well. There is no confusion in truth."

<sup>4</sup> Mpu Tantular was a very famous poet of the Majapahit kingdom. One of his works that was very famous was the Sutasoma Book. Mpu Tantular lived in the 14th century in Majapahit during the reign of King Rājasanagara (Hayam Wuruk).



multicultural social community, there is always a tendency of existing social groups to humiliate, marginalize, destroy, and negate ethnicities, races, customs, and cultures including religion which is different from their primordial and culture. In this existence situation, pluralism and multiculturalism as a thought recognizing that every social entity in the human co-existence has right to live, can be offered as an alternative solution in an effort to promote a harmonious, peaceful, just, and prosperous human-coexistence. This short article which is compiled based on the results of literature studies and field observations attempts to describe and invite readers to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of pluralism and multiculturalism. Hopefully, through this discussion, the misunderstanding of pluralism and multiculturalism can be resolved.

**Key words:** Multiculturalism, pluralism, social entities, existence situation and coexistence.

## INTRODUCTION

There is a truth that cannot be rejected that existence situation of human coexistence in the world is not one. The existence situation of human co-existence in this universe is plural: human co-existence in which there are diverse races, ethnicities, tribes, beliefs, customs or rules how to behave, values, arts, perceptions modes, way of human thinking and working and all their various cultural ornaments as well. There are many races with various physical characteristics and there are a lot of social groups, including ethnic groups in it, which have different cultures.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, in human co-existence, even each individual in a social group has often different perspectives, opinions and characteristics. It is clearly revealed through Javanese Proverb which says, “*Séjé silit séjé anggít; Désa mawa cara; Nègara mawa tata*”. Concisely, it is a fact that diversity exists in all of our social co-existence world. In literature, such social life is called as a pluralistic society—plural and multicultural society. Therefore, pattern of this society is pluralistic and multicultural.

The proverb above has relatively same meaning with this proverb: When in Rome, do as Romans do. This proverb tells us that a certain society, in a certain place and maybe in a certain time, has different customs, rules and cultures. Instead of inter-

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<sup>5</sup> What is meant by “ethnicity” in this paper is social unity characterized by identity awareness of diversity of ethnicity and culture.

society, even inter-individual has often different perspectives and opinions. (*séjé silit séjé anggít*). Therefore, through that proverb, Javanese people used to teach us that when we visit a certain place, we must respect the local customs or the rules set in the place. Especially, if we want to live there, we must behave as revealed through this proverb “When in Rome, do as Romans do.” Or, if you do not want to merge (*manjing ajur-ajèr*) in the culture where we live, at least, we must appreciate and respect the culture which is different with our own culture—do not underestimate, steep up and even destroy the customs, rules and culture of the society. Moreover, we intend to replace it with other customs, rules, and cultures; either with our culture; or with foreign culture that we claim the best, more righteous and perfect in the world. Those people truly do not deserve to consider as human to be entrenched.

As stated previously, the matters in the plural and multicultural social life, in general, are strong tendency from majority and dominant social groups to underestimate, destroy the diversity of cultures and replace it with their own cultures. For instance; in a diversity of co-existence context in Indonesia, there is a strong trend from certain dominant religious groups (strong and majority) to reduce, eliminate and negate other groups which do not have same beliefs with them; even though their ideology and culture come from or be imported from foreign countries. It eventually triggers or causes interreligious tensions and conflicts. If so, the question is how to deal with and respond to the diverse cultures? Sociologists, politicians and anthropologist realize that pluralism and multiculturalism are alternative solutions to be offered.<sup>6</sup>

This short article will discuss about pluralism and multiculturalism in their co-existence by stressing on the impact of interreligious life starting from the experience of people of archipelago which then became Indonesia in addressing the diversity of races, ethnicities, tribes and cultures including customs and religions in it. Hopefully, through this socio-historical study, this article is able to stimulate readers thinking to formulate critical thoughts in discovering alternative models of interreligious relations that support plural and multicultural co-existence situations. Although, this article is considered too bombastic and

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<sup>6</sup> Some of them are Lowrence Auster (1992), Chandran Kukanthas (1993), Nathan Glazer (1997), Joseph Raz (1998), Will Kymlicka (1995,2001), Stephen Macedo (1995), Bhikku Parekh (2000), dan Mark Lopez (2000).

utopian, this is, at least, able to inform and remind us all that in the co-existence of humankind in the archipelago have occurred and developed social practices indicating as an expression of spirit of pluralism and multiculturalism in responding to the diversity of social entities describing the situations of humankind co-existence including religious life and diversity of mankind.

## **PLURALISM AND MULTICULTURALISM: TERM, MEANING AND ITS USE**

In daily life, term of multiculturalism is often misunderstood, misinterpreted, and mixed up in the use as it happens to terms, such as liberalism, pluralism, secularism, and syncretism. It is getting worse by a certain social group the term of multiculturalism and pluralism are often understood having same meaning with syncretism and religious relativism. The same thing happens to term of secularism as well. Secularism is often understood as “Religious desacralization” which keep people away from religion; its existence thus must be rejected. Based on this fact, I think it is not an exaggeration to say that they seem to have ism-phobias and then become antipathy to isms. These -isms seems to have been considered and positioned as religion competitor. Therefore, before explaining about pluralism and multiculturalism with the impacts on religious life, the meaning and difference of the terms must be clarified and emphasized in order not to make confusion and misunderstanding.

Multicultural is a new word being formed from the word multi and culture. The word multi means plural, many or more than one; whereas, the word culture is interpreted as the whole way of life adhered together in a society. Culture is the whole of human cultivation in order to answer the problems of life and life itself.<sup>7</sup> It is said to be a whole way of life because culture consists of various things in it, such as belief, knowledge, rules to act and behave, values, arts, perception modes (*séjé silit séjé anggít*) and the way of human thinking and deed. (Mardimin, 1994; Blackburn, 2008). Multicultural is a noun being used to refer and describe social fact—existence situation of human co-existence consisting of various cultures and complexities of the elements.

The term of multicultural is an adjective too. This term refers to character of social community that consists of the diversity of

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<sup>7</sup> At the beginning, the word culture in English and French refers to human efforts to cultivate the soil in order to grow crop, vegetables, and so on (Leahy, 1989).

tribes, races, ethnicities, languages, and the ornaments either in a certain locality or in an entire human world. Such social community often occurs dissensus so that it triggers social conflicts. Ritzer & Smart (2001) use a term of multicultural to utter entire world of dissensus regarding membership rules or citizenship rules, let alone to identity recognition as it is.<sup>8</sup> In other words, it can be said that multicultural is an adjective that refers diversity of life pattern of human co-existence consisting various elements, such as customs, values, local wisdom how to act and behave, arts, perception modes and way of thinking and acting and complexities of the cultures as well. Wherever and whenever this kind of co-existence has always potential to conflicts. Therefore, in order to avoid it from destructive conflicts, a common understanding is needed—called multiculturalism.

The word of multiculturalism is a term of word formed from the word multicultural in a sense stated above and the word -ism which means understanding or belief system based on ideal philosophical values, social, politics, economic, etc. This term of multiculturalism is generally used to signify understanding or an aim of ideology expressing that every culture has right to live—means right to exist and develop. Yet, the question is what the difference between multiculturalism and pluralism is?

Either at conceptual level or at praxis level, multiculturalism is frequently comprehended having same meaning with pluralism. It appears because they have same objects which are diversity or variety of social entities and a dialogical-co-existential relations. However, at the conceptual level, there is something distinguishing them. In multiculturalism, multi or plural is only the culture; whereas, in the pluralism, the plural is not only the culture but also other non-culture aspects, for example, races, ethnicities and tribes.

The interesting thing from these two is pluralism, like multiculturalism, is also an understanding that considers every social entity has right to live and right to develop its life. Pluralism also uncovers that every individual and/or social groups having different character and culture have right to live and save the uniqueness of their own cultures. Therefore, recognizing, accepting and respecting the difference in human co-existence is the basis of human obligations that must be appreciated and applied as to

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<sup>8</sup> George Ritzer & Barry Smart, 2001, *Handbook of Social Theory*, London: SAGE Publications.

align to human rights. Same with multiculturalism, pluralism is not also a finished product as “a divine package coming from heaven”. Multiculturalism and pluralism are results of consensus. Actually, it is a never ending result. Based on Indonesia experience, the difficulty of actualizing the multiculturalism and pluralism into an action clearly reveals that both of them are repeatedly being and continuing to be a “becoming” process.

Multiculturalism and pluralism are social constructions intended to build a new world—human world in which there is an interaction of mutual respect and tolerance one and another. With that constructions, it is hoped that inter-social element, inter-social entity, either in individuals or social groups can live by accepting and respecting one and another and co-exist then it will create a new life in which there is no longer social entity being humiliated and there is no longer social entity is regarded higher than other entity is. Thus, even if there is a tension and conflict, those can be solved soon because the existing social structures have been conditioned to be always ready to anticipate and overcome tension and social conflicts that might occur. In such community, inter-individual relationship and inter groups with different characters and culture are dialogic.

Based on the explanation above, it can be seen quite clearly that multiculturalism and pluralism require a willingness and ability to accept the differences. It has certainly implications on demand of moderate changes to standing social and political institutions in order minority can express and preserve their cultures. Without those things, ideas, dreams and hope of multiculturalism and pluralism will never come true. Both of them will be utopian, artificial, and meaningless. So, what is significantly to emphasize in multiculturalism and pluralism concepts are willingness and psychic ability of each individual and social groups to accept the differences and ready to co-exist with people and other social community with different tribes, customs, religion, language, ethnic and all ornaments in the complexities culture.

## **MULTICULTURALISM, PLURALISM, NATIONAL POLITICS AND ITS IMPACTS ON INTER-RELIGIOUS LIFE**

In the human co-existence, the term of multiculturalism and pluralism are often associated with politics—citizenship politics. I think this reasonably makes sense because multiculturalism and pluralism are strongly related to the rights of citizens.

According to Kukathas (2004, in a political context, multiculturalism appeared in 1960s-1970s when the term was used to declare the Canada new public policy regarding citizens' rights. The new policy, based on Kukathas, started in Canada in 1971 and then in Australia.<sup>9</sup> Kukathas argued that Canada is the first country in the world that apply the idea of multiculturalism in their country's public policy. With this multiculturalism policy, the government of Canada emphasized that value and dignity of the citizens were not based on the background of ethnic, regional, religion, language and even the other primordial things. The human dignity is determined by the existence situation—by the humanity.

In fact, concepts and practices that similar to the concepts and practices of multiculturalism and pluralism, have at least theoretically emerged and developed in the archipelago long time ago before this term was used to refer to new public policy in Canada and in Australia in the 1960s and 1970s. The phrase "*Séjé silit séjé anggit; Désa mawa cara; Nêgara mawa tata*" developing in the archipelago which is no longer traceable when it appeared for the first time and the phrase written by MPU Tantular in the Sutasoma Book in the 1340s which was said "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, Tan hana dharma mangrwa*", are concrete evidences regarding multiculturalism growth of understanding and practices in archipelago. This phrase "*Séjé silit séjé anggit; Désa mawa cara; Nêgara mawa tata*" stated concepts and practices of multiculturalism in social politics society in archipelago; while the phrase "*Bhinneka tunggal ika, Tan hana dharma mangrwa*" written by Mpu Tantular asserted the multiculturalism growth of comprehension and manners in religious life context in archipelago society at the time.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Chandran Kukathas, 2004, *Nationalism and Multikulturalism*, in Gerald F. Gaus & Chandran Kukathas, *Handbook of Political Theory*, London: SAGE Publications, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> This proverb states in line 139, stanza 5. Kakawin (Book) Sutasoma—Master piece of Mpu Tantular written in Sankrit. Completely the stanza reads:

*Rwāneka dhātu winuwus Buddha Wiśwa,  
Bhīnneki rakwa ring apan kēna parwanosān,  
Mangkāng Jinatwa kalawan Śiwatatwa tunggal,  
Bhīnneka tunggal ika; tan hana dharma mangrwa.*

Literally translated:

It is said that the forms of Buddha and Shiva are different,  
They are indeed different, but how can they be recognized?  
Because the truth taught by Jina (Buddha) and Shiva is singular.  
They are indeed different, but in essence the same; because there is no ambiguous truth.

It was seemingly inspiring Soekarno and his friends to incorporate the spirit of multiculturalism and pluralism when they were formulating Pancasila as ideology of the Republic of Indonesia and assigned emblem of Garuda carrying a ribbon that reads “Bhineka Tunggal Ika” which means “Unity in Diversity” in middle 1945. Indeed, we must admit that actualizing this idea is still questionable. Because more than 75 years of age of Indonesia, discrimination and legitimacy of iron law—considering that majority and the strong perceives having right most to rule and dominate has still taken place. In Indonesia today, dominant-majority groups are being selfish and power which is built on the democratic values in this country is as well not able to work out optimal as what the aim of multiculturalism is conceptualized. Minority groups, especially, ethnic and religion minority groups are still oppressed and continuously under threat of vandalism from dominant groups. Establishing building for worship is complicated. There are even certain religious groups that are not given right to live. There were many of buildings for worship being damaged, burnt and destroyed with excuses not having a building permit, not receiving an environmental permit because it is regarded to harm or tarnish a certain religion. Meanwhile, protest actions they have done were often followed by threat of vandalism, brutalism, terror and destruction as it already happened in Poso and Singkil, Aceh. It is also overshadowed by threat of against majority and threat of punishment for blasphemy. What interesting from brutalism by the majority group is that feeling of becoming victim and tarnished are used as legitimacy to oppress and violate. At this point, Chandra Kukathas’ statement, that stated Canada and Australia as the first and second countries in the world which applied multiculturalism in their country public policy, is true.<sup>11</sup>

Such circumstance of existence will be a problem when it is related to nationalism;<sup>12</sup> It is especially if we confront with theory of Will Kymlicka (1995). In his theory, Kymlicka mentions that there are three types of minority rights or rights distinguishing based

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(See, Mpu Tantular, *Kakawin Sutasoma*, terjemahan Dwi Roro Retno Mastuti dan Hastho Bramantyo, Penerbit Komunitas Bambu, 2009, pgs. 504–505).

<sup>11</sup> *Off.cit.* Chandran Kukathas, 2004, *Nationalism and Multikulturalism*, in Gerald F. Gaus & Chandran Kukathas, *Handbook of Political Theory*, London: SAGE Publications, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> What I meant by nationalism is awareness of membership in a political community of nations in order to be together to preserve territory of the country and jointly to achieve, strive for and preserve the harmony, just, prosperity by by perpetuating and dedicating their identity and integrity.

on groups which must be given to ethnic and national groups. The rights differentiating according to these groups focused on national and ethnic minority group distinction. What is meant by national minority group is an ethnic group whose culture once has ever ruled itself and territorial centered which is at this time already merged in a country. In the case of Indonesia, it could be entitled the Javanese ethnic group—the Kingdom of the Sultanate of Ngajogjakarta Hadiningrat, and the Kingdom of the Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat; Malay ethnic groups—the Srivijaya Kingdom in South Sumatra; as well as other ethnic groups who have conducted self-government, such as the Dayak tribe in Kalimantan and ethnic communities in Papua, etc. Meanwhile, what is meant by ethnic minority group is ethnic groups who have been immigrated to a certain territory of a country and who do not want to conduct their own government. Nevertheless, they want to keep their customs and primordial identity. The types of minority rights mentioned by Kymlicka is rights to conduct their own government, poly-ethnic rights and special representative rights.

According to Kymlicka, rights to control its own government requires power delegation to national minority groups, such as the indigenous ethnic groups. But, rights to conduct its own government is not applicable to other culture minority groups who immigrated to a particular country. The other culture minority groups who immigrated to a country that have poly-ethnic rights which are rights to guarantee legal protection related to deeds characterizing their unique primordial, including their religious practices in it. Kymlicka argued that either the indigenous ethnic groups or immigrant minority groups deserved to have special representative rights that guarantee place to minority groups in a state institution.

From the three types of minority rights that have been described by Kymlicka, the rights to organize its own government is very potential to be interpreted as rights to do separation or rights to separate themselves from a country where they had merged themselves or had been merged in an extensively country. Here are pluralism and multiculturalism to be considered threatening nationalism. Unless, the rights to manage their own government in a frame of federalism which means that it is still remaining in a frame of territory of federal state. The question is what the impacts of multiculturalism and pluralism are for religious life in Indonesia?



In Indonesia, the advance of multiculturalism and pluralism are thought as competitor of religions. Or, it is, at least, assumed to harm religion. Multiculturalism and pluralism are equated with religious relativism. Thus, it must be excluded. Consequently, religions tend to be protective, especially heavenly religion which is missionary religion. It is even becoming more aggressive toward people who are perceived threats. More deeply, regarding impacts of the multiculturalism and pluralism will be discussed on the following description of critics and challenges of multiculturalism and pluralism.

## **CRITICS AND CHALLENGES OF MULTICULTURALISM AND PLURALISM**

Multiculturalism and pluralism are not a perfect ideology concepts. Multiculturalism and pluralism have also many weaknesses and shortcomings. Besides of the concepts that are considered to be problem against certain groups, these multiculturalism and pluralism practices also gain critics and challenges. In fact, multiculturalism and pluralism also receive resistance from specific social groups. All of these will be discussed on the following explanation.

### **Resistance of -Ism-Phobia Groups**

Wherever and in what nation, there are practically certain groups that are, in general, from religious groups exposed by -ism-phobia. Politic-religious isms, such as pluralism, multiculturalism, syncretism, liberalism, secularism, relativism, etc. are often positioned as competitor that threat their religions and religiosities. This occurs due to their slight understanding of -isms evolving in community. They understood these -isms as schools of beliefs related to human co-existence relations with the Creator. It is, thus, considered disturbing and having potential to destroy their religions and religiosities. The resistance of Indonesia Ulama Council and individual academics who are not open-minded, partial, stereotype in Indonesia of pluralism is concrete examples to this cases.<sup>13</sup> One of their reasons is that pluralism, in religion and religiosity, is worried to desacralize and relativize the existence of religion. Responding to this case, in "Islamic Argument for Pluralism: Progressive Islam

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<sup>13</sup> As broad meaning of pluralism, religious pluralism has also broad perspective. Religious pluralism does not only have mindset that there is no one of religious group deserve to claim their religion is more righteous; but, also relating to acceptance of certain religious group to other religions which have different beliefs. According to Pluralist group that all religion has its own truth.

and its Discourses Development,” Budhy Munarman-Rachman as an religious intellectual in Indonesia argued, “based on Indonesia Ulama Council fatwa mindset, pluralism is considered as theology threat toward Islam.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Resistance of Dominant Majority Groups**

Generally, both religion groups and majority, dominant, and well-established ethnic groups have tendency to resist pluralism and multiculturalism. For religious groups, the failure of the absolute truth claims of religions repeatedly becomes reason why they are doing rejection. For, by pluralism and multiculturalism, there are no more in this world religions that is more righteous than other religions are. Every religion has its own truth and must be accepted as it is as each truth.

In a religious life, pluralism and multiculturalism are not totally something new. In Islam, for example. As written by Nur Syam (2009:60–61) and Maarif (2021:192–209), in an era of Prophet Muhammad SAW, pluralism has already existed in human co-existence life. The prophet Muhammad has already actualized what we are now calling pluralism and multiculturalism in his policies through Medina Charter which contain human rights, right and obligation of state, right for legal protection and religious tolerance. With the Medina Charter, the prophet Muhammad declared and protected the other believers and pledged equality and freedom toward those in taking care of their religious needs. The problem is the next progress. Not all religious people get and are willing to accept it, even among the educated.

It is weird while the academics in several certain universities rejected pluralism and multiculturalism by striking it with western civilization. One of them is a following journal article quote written by Kholit Karomi:

“Pluralism movement is one of implementing liberalization of thought initiated by western. The purpose of liberalization is spreading western values to simplify the practices of colonialization. For the sake to ‘smooth out’ the liberalization, it is then used the “robe” of renewal of Islamic thought where Islam traditional concepts are inserted ism, concept, system and the way of foreign mindset, such

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<sup>14</sup> See Suhadi Cholil (ed.) *Resonansi Dialog Agama dan Budaya: dari Kebebasan Beragama, Pendidikan Multikultural, Sampai RUU Anti Pornografi*, Yogyakarta: CRCS, 2008.

as liberalism, secularism, religious pluralism, relativism, feminisms, gender and so on. This kind of ‘renewal of Islam thought’ that in fact, will result deconstruction of Islam values. By this religious pluralism, Muslims are led not to believe the religion’s truth or at least, they has not claimed anymore that their religion is more righteous.”<sup>15</sup>

It is similar with inter-ethnic life or inter-tribal life. The certain tribes, who feel threatened by pluralism and multiculturalism. It is because based on their experience, pluralism and multiculturalism caused community being pushed and displaced, tend to resist or reject. I think these rejections like this deserve to be our common concerns as part of community that hope for harmony, peace, just, and prosperous in life together.

### **Critics and Rejections from Indigenous Groups**

Pluralism and multiculturalism should not only struggle for rights and interests of immigrant culture of minority groups but those should also struggle for the rights of indigenous tribal groups which are minority in modern countries. Therefore, when pluralism and multiculturalism do not work out the purposes, social tensions and even bloody conflicts will happen. Learning from the cases in Indonesia, the worries like this, have become true in several places. The incident of East Timor on November 1991, the dispute of inter-ethnic in Sanggau Ledo, West Kalimantan in 1995–1997, bloody violence involving Dayak and Madura tribes in Sampit in East Waringin City and Pontianak in central Kalimantan in 2000, conflict in Poso in central Sulawesi in 2000–2001, Riot incident in Lampung in 2012 involving Bali and Lampung ethnic are only a few of them. All of these incidents, if we traced back, were motivated by massive population movement in the previous time—either through transmigration program initiated by government or through independent migration of population. The problem is besides they then took over economic domination, they also brought their own primordial cultures. Based on data, most of them are migrants from Java, from Bali in the case of Lampung and from Madura in the case of Sampit. (Mas’oed, dkk. 2001).

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<sup>15</sup> Kholid Karomi is a lecturer in Faculty of Ushuluddin ISID Gontor, Ponorogo. See Kholit Karomi, 2014. *Penolakan Ibnu Arabi terhadap Pluralisme Agama*, dalam *Jurnal Khalimah* Vol. 12, No. 1, Maret 2014. <https://ejournal.unida.gontor.ac.id/index.php/kalimah/article/view/218/210>

From the incidents above, it can be noticed clearly that pluralism and multiculturalism are actually not really good and unfavorable for the indigenous tribes because the implication is the marginalization of community and their traditional culture. Unfortunately, the migrants commonly assemble to build exclusive settlements with customs, religions, and ornaments of their culture. It, of course, raised gaps and culture tensions which triggered the rise of primordial spirit tending to humiliate, marginalize, destroy and negate cultures that is different with their primordial cultures.

In the Indonesian context, besides of incidents stated above, our concerns are that similar cases are potential to take place everywhere. One of them in Papua. According to some of students from Papua who I interviewed Papuan population is, currently, dominated by migrants from outside Papua. The number of indigenous Papuan residents (OAP) are less than the migrants. Moreover, the migrants control strategic domains, not only in economic field but also in political domain and other social domains. Because of that, it is no wonder if in politics, the members of Regional People Representatives Council are dominated by migrants than the indigenous people are. I think that these all are weaknesses of public policies motivated by pluralism and multiculturalism, such as transmigration program made by New Order government since 1970s. The incidents above are concrete evidences of weaknesses of pluralism and multiculturalism that caused push, displacement and marginalization of indigenous inhabitants.

### **Critics and Rejections of Feminism Groups**

For the feminist groups, multiculturalism is valued to marginalize as well or at least to support marginalization of women. Multiculturalism discovers protection for fractions or organizations that have sexist practices that harm women in striving for right to live on their culture groups including religion and the faith-based organization. As stated by Gaus and Kukathas (2004), the critical assessment is principally uttered by Susan Okin (1998; 1999a; 1999b; and 2002) who intensely opposed multiculturalism followers who do not have commitment on rights of women.

The critic of Susan Okin was not without reason. As we discussed above, multiculturalism presents right to live and guarantee to traditional cultures and asks every individual and/or social group to respect each traditional culture as it is as well as traditional cultures that do not even give right and equal opportunity to women. In

fact, almost all of traditional cultures of nations in the world put women in a second position as human. With socio-cultural jargons, traditional cultures honestly put women in a second position as human. Ironically, heavenly religions being trusted by world citizens put women under men domination and class. I guess that among of us, who are academics, theologians, activists for women movement and activist human rights enforcement, do not mind this.

In a context of Indonesian traditional cultures in which there are more than 300 tribal cultures which are traditional culture can be spoken that none of them that do not place women in a second position—as a second class citizens and as sub-ordinate of men. Furthermore, Minang culture which is said as to have matrilineal pattern, through *Ninik Mamak*,<sup>16</sup> actually, place women on the second position, let alone to decision-making processes within the environment of their indigenous culture. That is why radical feminist groups strongly do not agree and tend to oppose multiculturalism as said by Katha Pollit (1999) that in demanding equality for women, feminism put itself to counter to almost all traditional cultures in the world.<sup>17</sup>

### **Critics of Liberal Groups to Pluralism and Multiculturalism**

From its sides, pluralism and multiculturalism have similarity with liberalization. Pluralism, multiculturalism or liberalization is the ideology based on understanding that equality of rights is the core values of co-existence that must be struggled for. The problem is that according to enlightenment liberalists who believe in liberalism of perspective appeared in enlightenment era around in early sixteenth century which emphasized on the importance of individual freedom, pluralism and multiculturalism are considered not consistent with liberalism because both of them give respects to social values and diversity; whereas, liberal groups steadfastly said that they prefer to support individuality than diversity.

As what Kukatha said (2004), the Critics of liberal groups to multiculturalism is also expressed by Brian Berry through his book

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<sup>16</sup> *Ninik Mamak* is custom institution of Minangkabau consist of several headmen who come from various clans in Minangkabau tribe. This institution is filled by clan leaders which are all men called headmen. The headmen position is inherited from generation to generation according to Minangkabau matrilineal customs. The headmen position is held by Minangkabau men who are entrusted and considered capable to lead wisely. ([https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ninik\\_Mamak](https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ninik_Mamak)).

<sup>17</sup> See Katha Pollit. 1999. *Whose Culture? In Is Multiculturalism Bad for Woman?* Edited by Susan Moller Okin, Published by: Princeton University Press.

titled Culture and Equality (2001). According to Berry, Will Galston's Reformation liberalism stated that theory of liberalization admires respect for individuals which is then indicating respect for culture held by individual and utters that liberalism respect diversity because diversity increases various choices for individual does not make sense. Berry argues that culture which is not liberal as aligned to enlightenment liberalism as well as often violate equality term of respect, does not deserve to respect.

## **MULTICULTURALISM-PLURALISM AS SOLUTIONS**

As explained above, it is clearly that in multicultural and pluralistic society are necessity if we want to have a harmony, just, peace and prosperous co-existence and development of policy based on multiculturalism and pluralism spirit. With all of the weaknesses and strengths, multiculturalism and pluralism are the only solutions that ensure creation of a harmony, just, peace and prosperous co-existence. It means multiculturalism and pluralism are necessity not an option in a multicultural and pluralistic community.

Without multiculturalism and pluralism, the dream of most of groups about a harmony, just, peace and prosperous society will never become reality. And the inter-religious co-existence will continually be colored by tensions and social conflicts caused by primordialistic differences, such as differences in ethnics, races, religions, customs, etc. The problem is to realize the idea and desire, multiculturalism and pluralism require several conditions which are not easy to fulfill. For instance: first, multiculturalism and pluralism demand a willingness of all individual and/or social groups to accept, respect and appreciate individuals or other social groups whose racial, ethnicity, customs and all of the cultural trinkets are different with their cultures. Second, as mentioned above, multiculturalism and pluralism require moderation of social structure and social institutions. Third, in a community it is not allowed to do social classification based on relations and primordialistic characters. It means that there should no longer be any social groups considered lower or higher based on race, ethnic, language, customs and so on in multicultural and pluralistic community. Fourth, in a multicultural and pluralistic social-state community, multiculturalism and pluralism insist commitment of the authority which government and all its staffs to persistently afford and keep togetherness by enhancing and implementing public policies which have pluralism and multiculturalism.

## CONCLUSION

To close this concise article, I, once again, want to emphasize that in a plural and multicultural human co-existence, let alone to co-existence overshadowed by the increasing development of intolerant groups, such as in Indonesia, pluralism and multiculturalism are absolutely needed. Without it, our co-existence will constantly colored by tensions and social conflicts which are unnecessary and unproductive at all.

It is true, as already mentioned above, pluralism and multiculturalism have limitations. Therefore, our homework is to think and strive for any things that can cover all deficiencies of pluralism and multiculturalism. It is our work, especially, for whom have desire about a harmony, peace, just and prosperous co-existence of human being. God knows best!

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# MULTIKULTURALISME DAN PLURALISME DALAM KEHIDUPAN- BERSAMA KITA: KAJIAN SOSIOLOGIS TENTANG DAMPAK KEBERAGAMAN BUDAYA TERHADAP KEHIDUPAN ANTARUMAT BERAGAMA

*J. Mardimin*<sup>1</sup>

*Séjé silit séjé anggit; Désa mawa cara; Nêgara mawa tata.*<sup>2</sup>  
(Anonim)

*Bhinneka tunggal ika. Tan hana dharma mangrwa.*<sup>3</sup>  
(Sutasoma, Mpu Tantular<sup>4</sup>, abad ke-14)

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<sup>2</sup> Jika diterjemahkan secara bebas, Pepatah tersebut kurang lebih berbunyi: “Lain orang lain pendapat, tiap Desa mempunyai adat-istiadat [tata cara] sendiri-sendiri, [dan] masing-masing Negara memiliki hukum sendiri-sendiri.”

<sup>3</sup> Mpu Tantular dalam *Kitab Sutasoma* yang ditulis pada masa Kerajaan Majapahit di bawah kekuasaan Raja Hayam Wuruk. Jika diterjemahkan secara *letterlij*, ungkapan tersebut kurang lebih berbunyi: “Terpecah belahlah itu, tetapi satu jugalah itu. Tidak ada kerancuan dalam kebenaran.”

<sup>4</sup> Mpu Tantular adalah pujangga kerajaan Majapahit yang sangat masyur. Salah satu karyanya yang sangat terkenal adalah *Kitab Sutasoma*. Mpu Tantular hidup pada abad ke-14 di Majapahit pada masa pemerintahan raja Rājasanagara (Hayam Wuruk).

## **ABSTRACT**

Di muka bumi ini, ada banyak negara yang di dalamnya hidup berbagai suku, ras, adat istiadat, keyakinan, dan berbagai kompleksitas budayanya yang berbeda-beda. Dalam komunitas menegara yang demikian, umumnya, selalu diwarnai ketegangan-ketegangan dan konflik-konflik sosial yang bersifat primordial. Sebab, dalam komunitas sosial yang plural dan multikultural selalu ada kecenderungan dari kelompok-kelompok sosial yang ada untuk saling merendahkan, meminggirkan, menghancurkan, dan menegasikan suku-suku, ras, adat istiadat, dan budaya-budaya—termasuk di dalamnya: agama—yang berbeda dengan primordial dan budayanya. Dalam situasi-eksistensi semacam itu, pluralisme dan multikulturalisme, paham yang mengakui bahwa setiap entitas sosial dalam kehidupan-bersama umat manusia memiliki hak hidup, dapat ditawarkan sebagai [alternatif] solusi dalam upaya merajud kehidupan-bersama manusia yang rukun, damai, adil, dan sejahtera. Artikel singkat yang disusun berdasarkan halis studi literatur dan pengamatan lapangan ini mencoba mendeskripsikan dan mengajak para pembaca untuk mendiskusikan tentang kelebihan-kelebihan dan kekurangan-kekurangan pluralisme dan multikulturalisme. Harapannya, melalui diskusi ini, kesalahpahaman tentang keduanya dapat diselesaikan.

**Kata-kata Kunci:** multikulturalisme, pluralisme, entitas sosial, situasi-eksistensi, dan kehidupan bersama.

## **PENGANTAR**

Adalah suatu kenyataan yang tidak dapat ditolak bahwa, situasi-eksistensi kehidupan-bersama manusia di dunia tidaklah tunggal. Situasi-eksistensi kehidupan-bersama manusia di jagad raya ini bersifat plural; kehidupan-bersama manusia yang di dalamnya terdapat berbagai ragam ras, etnis, suku bangsa, keyakinan, adat istiadat atau aturan-aturan tentang cara bersikap dan berperilaku, nilai-nilai, seni, mode-mode persepsi, serta kebiasaan berpikir dan beraktivitas manusia, berikut seluruh pernik-pernik budayanya yang berbeda-beda. Ada banyak ras dengan ciri-ciri fisik yang berbeda-beda; dan ada banyak kelompok sosial—termasuk suku bangsa-suku bangsa di dalamnya—yang mempunyai budaya yang

berbeda-beda.<sup>5</sup> Bahkan, lebih dari itu, dalam kehidupan-bersama umat manusia, antarindividu dalam satu kelompok sosial pun acap kali berbeda-beda pandangan, pendapat, dan tabiatnya. Ungkapan Jawa “*Séjé silit séjé anggít; Désa mawa cara; Nègara mawa tata*” yang dikutip di atas dengan sangat gamblang mengungkapkan hal tersebut. Pendek kata, adalah suatu fakta bahwa keanekaragaman ada di semua segi kehidupan-bersama (dunia sosial) kita. Dalam literatur, kehidupan sosial yang demikian disebut sebagai masyarakat majemuk, masyarakat plural dan multikultur; yang karena itu, corak masyarakatnya pluralistik dan multikultural.

Pepatah atau peribahasa tersebut di atas kurang lebih sama artinya dengan pepatah “lain ladang lain belalang, lain lubuk lain ikannya”. Pepatah atau peribahasa tersebut menunjukkan kepada kita bahwa, tiap-tiap komunitas tertentu, di tempat tertentu, dan [mungkin juga] pada waktu tertentu memiliki adat istiadat, tata cara, dan budaya yang berbeda-beda. Alih-alih antarkomunitas, antarindividu pun tidak jarang berbeda-beda pula pandangan dan pendapatnya: *séjé silit séjé anggít*. Oleh karena itu, melalui pepatah tersebut, orang-orang Jawa dulu mengajarkan kepada kita bahwa, ketika kita mengunjungi tempat tertentu, kita harus menghormati adat istiadat setempat atau tata cara yang berlaku di tempat itu. Terlebih, kalau kita hendak tinggal di tempat itu; kita mesti bersikap dan berperilaku sebagaimana digambarkan dalam peribahasa “di mana bumi dipijak, di situ langit [mesti] dijunjung”. Atau, kalau kita tidak mau melebur (*manjing ajur-ajur*) dalam budaya di mana kita tinggal, setidaknya, kita harus menghormati dan menghargai budaya yang berbeda dengan budaya kita: tidak boleh meremehkan, menyepelkan, dan merusak adat istiadat, tata cara, dan budaya masyarakat yang ada. Apalagi, kita hendak menggantinya dengan adat istiadat, tata cara, dan budaya lainnya, baik budaya kita; atau budaya lain [asing] yang kita klaim paling baik, paling benar, dan paling sempurna di dunia. Orang-orang yang demikian, sungguh-sungguh tidak layak kita sebut sebagai manusia yang membudaya.

Masalahnya adalah: sebagaimana dikemukakan di atas, dalam kehidupan sosial yang plural dan multikultur, ada kecenderungan yang sangat kuat, umumnya, dari kelompok-kelompok sosial yang mayoritas dan dominan untuk merendahkan, menghancurkan

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<sup>5</sup> Yang dimaksud “suku bangsa” dalam tulisan ini adalah kesatuan sosial yang bercirikan adanya kesadaran identitas atas perbedaan etnisitas dan kebudayaannya.

keanekaragaman budaya itu, serta menggantinya dengan budaya yang dianutnya. Sebagai contoh; dalam konteks keberagaman kehidupan-bersama di nusantara, terdapat kecenderungan yang sangat kuat dari kelompok-kelompok keagamaan tertentu yang dominan (kuat dan mayoritas) untuk mereduksi, mengeliminasi, dan menegasi kelompok lain yang tidak seagama dengan mereka; sekalipun ideologi dan budaya mereka berasal, datang, atau mereka impor dari mancanegara. Inilah yang pada akhirnya memicu atau menyebabkan terjadinya ketegangan-ketegangan dan konflik-konflik antarumat beragama. Jika demikian, pertanyaannya adalah: bagaimana cara menghadapi dan menyikapi keberagaman budaya yang berbeda-beda tersebut? Para ahli sosiologi, politik, dan antropologi melihat pluralisme dan multikulturalisme sebagai alternatif jawaban yang dapat ditawarkan.<sup>6</sup>

Bertitik tolak dari pengalaman masyarakat nusantara—yang kemudian menjadi Indonesia— dalam menyikapi keanekaragaman ras, etnis, suku bangsa, dan budaya masyarakatnya—termasuk adat istiadat dan agama di dalamnya, artikel pendek ini akan membahas tentang pluralisme dan multikulturalisme dalam kehidupan bersama mereka dengan penekanan pada dampaknya bagi kehidupan antarumat beragama. Harapannya, kajian sosio-historis dalam artikel ini dapat merangsang kita untuk merumuskan pemikiran yang serius dalam mencari alternatif model hubungan antaragama yang mendukung situasi-eksistensi kehidupan-bersama yang plural dan multikultural. Jikalau itu pun dinilai terlalu bombastis dan utopis, artikel ini setidaknya dapat menginformasikan dan mengingatkan kembali kepada kita semua bahwa dalam kehidupan-bersama umat manusia di kawasan nusantara pernah muncul dan berkembang praktik-praktik sosial yang dapat diindikasikan sebagai ekspresi spirit pluralisme dan multikulturalisme dalam menyikapi keberagaman entitas sosial yang mewarnai situasi-eksistensi kehidupan-bersama umat manusia; termasuk di dalamnya kehidupan keagamaan dan keberagaman umat manusia.

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<sup>6</sup> Di antara mereka bisa disebut nama-nama seperti: Lawrence Auster (1992), Chandran Kukanthas (1993), Nathan Glazer (1997), Joseph Raz (1998), Will Kymlicka (1995,2001), Stephen Macedo (1995), Bhikku Parekh (2000), dan Mark Lopez (2000).

## PLURALISME DAN MULTIKULTURALISME: ISTILAH, MAKNA, DAN PENGGUNAANNYA

Dalam kehidupan sehari-hari, istilah multikulturalisme sering disalahpahami, disalahartikan, dan dicampuradukkan penggunaannya; seperti yang juga terjadi pada istilah-istilah: “liberalisme”, “pluralisme”, “sekularisme”, dan “sinkretisme”. Lebih celakanya lagi, oleh kelompok sosial tertentu, istilah “multikulturalisme” dan “pluralisme” sering dipahami sama arti dengan sinkretisme dan relativisme agama. Hal serupa juga terjadi pada istilah “sekularisme”. Sekularisme sering dipahami sebagai “desakralisasi agama”, yang dapat menjauhkan manusia dari agama; sehingga kehadirannya harus ditolak. Berdasarkan kenyataan tersebut, saya pikir tidaklah berlebihan jika dikatakan bahwa, sepertinya, mereka telah mengidap isme-fobia sehingga menjadi antipati terhadap isme-isme. Isme-isme itu, rupanya, telah dianggap dan diposisikan sebagai kompetitor agama. Oleh karena itu, sebelum menjelaskan pluralisme dan multikulturalisme berikut dampaknya terhadap kehidupan beragama, istilah-istilah tersebut perlu diperjelas dan dipertegas makna dan perbedaannya agar tidak menimbulkan kerancuan dan kesalahpahaman.

Multikultur adalah kata baru yang dibentuk dari kata “multi” dan “kultur”. Kata “multi” berarti “jamak, banyak, atau lebih dari satu”; dan kata “kultur” yang disamaartikan dengan kata “budaya” menunjuk pada “keseluruhan cara hidup yang dianut bersama dalam suatu masyarakat”. Kultur atau budaya merupakan keseluruhan budi daya manusia dalam rangka menjawab berbagai persoalan hidup dan kehidupannya.<sup>7</sup> Dikatakan sebagai keseluruhan cara hidup, karena kebudayaan di dalamnya terdiri atas berbagai hal, seperti keyakinan, ilmu pengetahuan, aturan-aturan tentang cara bersikap dan berperilaku, nilai-nilai, seni, mode-mode persepsi (*séjé silit séjé anggít*), serta kebiasaan berpikir dan beraktivitas manusia (Mardimin, 1994; Blackburn, 2008). Multikultur adalah kata benda yang dipakai untuk menunjuk dan mendeskripsikan kenyataan sosial (situasi eksistensi kehidupan-bersama manusia) yang di dalamnya terdiri atas berbagai macam budaya berikut kompleksitas unsur-unsurnya.

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<sup>7</sup> Kata “kultur” atau “*culture*” dalam Bahasa Inggris dan Prancis, pada awalnya, menunjuk pada berbagai usaha manusia untuk menyuburkan tanah guna ditanami tetumbuhan, sayur mayur, dan lain sebagainya (Leahy, 1989).

Istilah multikultural adalah kata sifat (*adjective*) hasil *adjectivatie* dari kata multikultur. Istilah multikultural dipakai untuk menunjuk pada karakter komunitas sosial yang di dalamnya terdapat keanekaragaman suku bangsa, ras, etnis, bahasa, dan pernik-pernik budayanya; baik dalam lokalitas tertentu maupun dalam dunia manusia secara keseluruhan. Komunitas sosial yang demikian selalu berpotensi terjadi disensus sehingga menjadi rawan terhadap konflik sosial. Ritzer & Smart (2001) menggunakan istilah multikultural untuk menyebut semua dunia tempat disensus terkait dengan aturan-aturan keanggotaannya (kewarga[-negara]annya), terutama pengakuan terhadap identitas sebagaimana adanya.<sup>8</sup> Dengan ungkapan yang berbeda dapat dikemukakan bahwa, multikultural adalah *adjective* yang menunjuk keberagaman pola hidup kehidupan-bersama manusia yang di dalamnya terdapat berbagai macam elemen, baik berupa, adat istiadat, nilai-nilai, dan aturan-aturan tentang cara bersikap dan berperilaku, seni, mode-mode persepsi, serta kebiasaan-kebiasaan berpikir dan aktivitasnya, serta segala kompleksitas budayanya. Kehidupan-bersama yang demikian, di mana pun, dan kapan pun, selalu menyimpan potensi konflik. Untuk itu, guna menghindarkan dari terjadinya konflik yang destruktif diperlukan kesepahaman bersama yang disebut multikulturalisme.

Istilah multikulturalisme merupakan kata baru bentukan dari kata “multikultural” dalam pengertian sebagaimana dikemukakan di atas dan kata “isme” yang berarti paham, atau sistem kepercayaan berdasarkan nilai-nilai ideal filosofis, sosial, politis, ekonomis, dan lain sebagainya. Istilah multikulturalisme umumnya dipakai untuk menunjuk paham atau kiblat ideologi yang berpandangan bahwa setiap kebudayaan memiliki hak hidup—hak untuk bisa tetap eksis dan hak untuk mengembangkannya. Pertanyaannya sekarang adalah: apa perbedaan multikulturalisme dan pluralisme?

Baik pada tataran konsep maupun dalam tataran praksis, multikulturalisme sering dipahami sama arti dengan pluralisme. Hal tersebut terjadi karena memiliki kesamaan objek, yaitu keanekaragaman atau keberagaman entitas sosial, serta adanya hubungan dialogis-koeksistensial di dalamnya. Tetapi, dalam tataran konsep, di antara keduanya ada yang membedakannya. Pada multikulturalisme yang “multi”, atau “jamak” adalah dan hanyalah kulturalnya atau budayanya; sedangkan pada pluralisme

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<sup>8</sup> George Ritzer & Barry Smart, 2001, *Handbook of Social Theory*, London: SAGE Publications.

yang plural (yang jamak atau yang majemuk) tidak hanya kulturalnya; tetapi juga aspek-aspek lain di luar kultur (non kultur), seperti ras, etnis, dan ke-suku-an.

Hal yang menarik dari keduanya: seperti halnya multikulturalisme, pluralisme juga merupakan paham yang berpandangan bahwa, tiap-tiap entitas sosial memiliki hak hidup dan hak untuk mengembangkan kehidupannya. Pluralisme juga berpandangan bahwa masing-masing individu dan atau kelompok-kelompok sosial yang berbeda-beda tabiat dan budayanya memiliki hak untuk tetap hidup dan menjaga keunikan budayanya masing-masing. Karena itu, mengakui, menerima, dan menghargai adanya perbedaan dalam kehidupan-bersama manusia adalah kewajiban-kewajiban asasi manusia yang harus dijunjung tinggi dan dipraktikkan seiring dan sejalan dengan hak-hak asasi manusia. Sama halnya dengan multikulturalisme, pluralisme juga bukanlah barang jadi sebagai “paket illahi” yang “jatuh dari langit”. Multikulturalisme dan pluralisme adalah hasil konsensus; bahkan merupakan hasil yang tidak pernah berakhir. Dari pengalaman Indonesia, sulitnya mengaktualisasikan multikulturalisme dan pluralisme dalam praktik dengan sangat jelas menunjukkan bahwa keduanya selamanya sedang dan terus berproses “menjadi”.

Multikulturalisme dan Pluralisme adalah konstruksi sosial yang ditujukan untuk membangun dunia baru, dunia manusia yang di dalamnya terdapat interaksi saling menghormati dan bertoleransi antara yang satu dengan yang lain. Dengan konstruksi itu, diharapkan, antarelemen sosial, atau antarentitas sosial, baik individu-individu dan/atau kelompok-kelompok sosial yang ada di dalamnya dapat hidup saling menerima dan saling menghormati, serta berkoeksistensi—suatu kehidupan baru yang di dalamnya tidak ada lagi entitas sosial yang direndahkan, dan tidak ada lagi entitas sosial yang dianggap lebih tinggi dari entitas sosial lainnya. Dengan demikian, jika pun terjadi ketegangan dan konflik, ia akan segera mendapatkan solusi, karena struktur-struktur sosial yang ada telah dikondisikan dan terkondisikan untuk selalu siap mengantisipasi dan mengatasi ketegangan-ketegangan dan konflik-konflik sosial yang mungkin akan terjadi. Dalam komunitas yang demikian, hubungan antarindividu dan antarkelompok yang berbeda-beda tabiat dan budayanya bersifat dialogis.

Dari uraian di atas, dapat terlihat cukup jelas bahwa, multikulturalisme dan pluralisme mensyaratkan adanya kesediaan



dan kemampuan untuk menerima perbedaan; yang tentu saja berimplikasi pada tuntutan perubahan-perubahan moderatif atas lembaga-lembaga sosial dan politik yang ada agar kelompok-kelompok minoritas dapat mengekspresikan dan melestarikan budayanya. Tanpa itu semua, gagasan, angan-angan, dan harapan multikulturalisme dan pluralisme tidak akan pernah menjadi kenyataan. Keduanya akan menjadi utopia, artifisial, dan tak ada maknanya. Jadi, yang perlu ditekankan dalam konsep multikulturalisme dan pluralisme adalah kesediaan dan kemampuan psikis setiap individu dan kelompok sosial untuk dapat menerima perbedaan dan bersedia untuk hidup berdampingan dengan orang atau kelompok sosial lain yang berbeda suku, adat, agama, bahasa, etnis, dan segala pernik-pernik kompleksitas budayanya.

### **MULTIKULTURALISME, PLURALISME, DAN POLITIK NASIONAL, SERTA DAMPAKNYA TERHADAP KEHIDUPAN ANTARUMAT BERAGAMA**

Dalam kehidupan-bersama umat manusia, istilah multikulturalisme dan pluralisme lebih sering dikaitkan dengan politik (politik kewarga-negeraan). Saya pikir, hal ini cukup masuk akal, karena multikulturalisme dan pluralisme terkait erat dengan hak-hak warga negara.

Menurut Kukathas (2004), dalam konteks politik, multikulturalisme baru muncul pada tahun 1960-an dan 1970-an, ketika istilah itu dipakai untuk menyebut kebijakan publik baru Kanada tentang hak-hak warga negaranya. Kebijakan baru itu, menurut Kukathas, berawal di Kanada pada tahun 1971, dan kemudian di Australia.<sup>9</sup> Kukathas berpendapat bahwa, Kanada merupakan Negara pertama di dunia yang menerapkan gagasan multikulturalisme dalam kebijakan publik negara mereka. Dengan kebijakan multikulturalisme tersebut, Pemerintah Kanada menegaskan bahwa nilai dan harkat martabat warga negaranya tidak didasarkan pada latar belakang kesukuan, kedaerahan, ikatan keagamaan, kebahasaan, maupun ikatan-ikatan primordial lainnya. Harkat dan martabat manusia ditentukan oleh situasi-eksistensinya; oleh ke-manusia-annya.

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<sup>9</sup> Chandran Kukathas, 2004, *Nationalism and Multikulturalism*, in Gerald F. Gaus & Chandran Kukathas, *Handbook of Political Theory*, London: SAGE Publications, 2004.

Sebenarnya, setidaknya secara konseptual, konsep dan praktik-praktik yang mirip dengan konsep dan praktik multikulturalisme [dan pluralisme] telah muncul dan berkembang di Nusantara jauh sebelum istilah itu dipakai untuk menyebut kebijakan publik baru di Kanada dan di Australia pada tahun 1960-an dan 1970-an. Ungkapan “*Séjé silit séjé anggít; Désa mawa cara; Nêgara mawa tata*” yang berkembang di Nusantara—yang sudah tidak terlacak lagi kapan munculnya; serta ungkapan “*Bhinneka tunggal ika, Tan hana dharma mangrwa*” yang ditulis mpu Tantular dalam Kitab Sutasoma pada 1340-an, adalah bukti-bukti konkret mengenai berkembangnya paham dan praktik-praktik multikulturalisme di Nusantara. Ungkapan “*Séjé silit séjé anggít; Désa mawa cara; Nêgara mawa tata*” mengungkapkan adanya konsep dan praktik-praktik multikulturalisme dalam konteks sosial-politik kemasyarakatan di nusantara; sedangkan ungkapan “*Bhinneka tunggal ika, Tan hana dharma mangrwa*” yang ditulis Mpu Tantular mengungkapkan berkembangnya paham dan praktik-praktik multikulturalisme dalam konteks kehidupan keber-agama-an masyarakat Nusantara ketika itu.<sup>10</sup>

Tampaknya, itulah yang menginspirasi Soekarno dan kawan-kawan untuk memasukkan spirit multikulturalisme dan pluralisme ketika merumuskan Pantjasila sebagai Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia dan menetapkan gambar burung garuda yang membawa pita bertuliskan “*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*” yang dimaknai “Berbeda-beda, tetapi tetap satu” pada pertengahan tahun 1945. Memang harus diakui, untuk aktualisasi gagasan tersebut masih bisa dipertanyakan. Sebab, hingga lebih dari 75 tahun usia negara-bangsa Indonesia, diskriminasi dan berlakunya hukum besi—yang berpandangan bahwa yang mayoritas dan yang kuat merasa paling

<sup>10</sup> Ungkapan tersebut tertera pada Pupuh 139, bait 5. Kakawin (Kitab) Sutasoma—karya agung mpu Tantular yang ditulis dalam Bahasa Sanskerta. Secara lengkap, bait tersebut bertuliskan:

*Rwāneka dhātu winuwus Buddha Wiśwa,  
Bhīnneki rakwa ring apan kēna parwanosān,  
Mangkāng Jinatwa kalawan Śiwatatwa tunggal,  
Bhīnneka tunggal ika; tan hana dharma mangrwa.*

Terjemahan bebasnya:

Dikisahkan wujud Buddha dan Siwa itu berbeda,  
Mereka memang berbeda, tetapi bagaimana bisa dikenali perbedaannya?  
Sebab kebenaran yang diajarkan Jina (Buddha) dan Siwa adalah tunggal.  
Mereka memang berbeda, tetapi hakikatnya sama; karena tidak ada kebenaran yang mendua.

(Lihat, Mpu Tantular, *Kakawin Sutasoma*, terjemahan Dwi Roro Retno Mastuti dan Hastho Bramantyo, Penerbit Komunitas Bambu, 2009, pgs. 504–505).

berhak untuk berkuasa dan menguasai—masih terus terjadi. Di Indonesia saat ini, kelompok-kelompok mayoritas-dominan masih mau menang sendiri; dan kekuasaan yang dibangun atas dasar nilai-nilai demokrasi di negeri ini juga belum dapat berbuat sesuatu yang benar-benar berarti sesuai asas multikulturalisme yang dikonsepsikan. Kelompok-kelompok minoritas, khususnya kelompok-kelompok minoritas etnis dan keagamaan masih terus dalam ketertindasan; dan terus-menerus dalam keterancaman vandalisme dari kelompok dominan. Mendirikan rumah ibadah dipersulit; bahkan masih ada kelompok keagamaan tertentu yang tidak diberi hak hidup. Dengan dalih tidak memiliki Izin Mendirikan Bangunan (IMB), tidak mendapat izin lingkungan karena dianggap mencederai atau menodai agama tertentu, banyak tempat ibadah yang dirusak, dibakar, dan dihancurkan. Sementara itu, aksi-aksi protes keberatan yang mereka ungkapkan, selain dibayang-bayangi ancaman vandalisme, brutalisme, teror dan ancaman penghancuran—seperti yang terjadi di Poso dan di Aceh Singkil, juga selalu dibayang-bayangi ancaman melawan mayoritas dan ancaman hukuman penistaan agama. Yang menarik dari kasus-kasus brutalisme oleh kelompok mayoritas tersebut, perasaan terzolimi dan ternodai selalu dipakai sebagai legitimasi untuk melakukan penindasan dan kekerasan. Di sinilah, catatan Chandran Kukathas yang menyatakan bahwa Kanada dan Australia sebagai negara pertama dan kedua di dunia yang menerapkan multikulturalisme dalam kebijakan publik negara mereka menemukan kebenarannya.<sup>11</sup>

Situasi eksistensi semacam itu menjadi masalah ketika dikaitkan dengan nasionalisme.<sup>12</sup> Terlebih, jika kita konfrontasikan dengan teori will Kymlicka (1995). Dalam teorinya, Kymlicka menyebut ada tiga jenis hak-hak minoritas atau hak-hak yang dibedakan berdasarkan golongan yang harus diberikan kepada golongan etnis dan kebangsaan. Hak-hak yang dibedakan berdasarkan golongan ini berpusat pada pembedaan golongan minoritas bangsa dan golongan minoritas etnis. Yang dimaksud golongan

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<sup>11</sup> *Off.cit.* Chandran Kukathas, 2004, *Nationalism and Multikulturalism*, in Gerald F. Gaus & Chandran Kukathas, *Handbook of Political Theory*, London: SAGE Publications, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Yang saya maksud nasionalisme di sini adalah kesadaran keanggotaan dalam suatu komunitas politik bangsa-bangsa yang menegara untuk bersama-sama mempertahankan wilayah negara-bangsanya; serta untuk bersama-sama mencapai, memperjuangkan, dan mempertahankan kerukunan, keadilan, dan kemakmuran bersama dengan mengabdikan dan mengabdikan identitas dan integritasnya.

minoritas bangsa adalah suku bangsa yang kebudayaannya pernah memerintah sendiri dan terpusat secara teritorial; yang saat ini telah melebur ke dalam suatu negara yang lebih besar. Dalam kasus Indonesia, bisa disebut suku bangsa Jawa—Kerajaan Kesultanan Ngajogjakarta Hadiningrat, dan Kerajaan Kasunanan Surakarta Hadiningrat; suku bangsa Melayu—Kerajaan Sriwijaya di Sumatera Selatan; serta berbagai suku bangsa lain yang pernah menyelenggarakan pemerintahan sendiri seperti: suku Dayak di Kalimantan; komunitas-komunitas etnik di Papua, dan lain sebagainya. Sedangkan yang dimaksud golongan minoritas etnis adalah suku bangsa-suku bangsa yang bermigrasi ke suatu wilayah negara tertentu dan tidak ingin menyelenggarakan pemerintahan sendiri; tetapi ingin mempertahankan adat istiadat dan identitas primordialnya. Ketiga hak-hak minoritas yang dimaksud Kymlicka adalah: hak-hak untuk menyelenggarakan pemerintahan sendiri, hak-hak polietnis, dan hak-hak perwakilan khusus.

Menurut Kymlicka, hak-hak untuk menyelenggarakan pemerintahan sendiri mengharuskan adanya pendelegasian kekuasaan kepada golongan-golongan minoritas bangsa, seperti suku bangsa-suku bangsa pribumi. Tetapi, hak-hak untuk menyelenggarakan pemerintahan sendiri ini tidak berlaku bagi golongan-golongan minoritas budaya lain yang bermigrasi ke negara tersebut. Golongan-golongan minoritas budaya lain yang bermigrasi ke suatu negara memiliki hak-hak polietnis—hak-hak yang menjamin perlindungan hukum terkait dengan praktik-praktik yang menjadi ciri khas primordialnya, termasuk di dalamnya praktik-praktik keagamaan mereka. Kymlicka berpendapat bahwa, baik suku bangsa-suku bangsa pribumi maupun kelompok minoritas imigran layak untuk mendapatkan hak-hak perwakilan khusus yang menjamin tempat bagi golongan-golongan minoritas dalam lembaga negara.

Dari ketiga hak-hak minoritas yang dikemukakan Kymlicka, hak-hak untuk menyelenggarakan pemerintahan sendiri sangat potensial untuk ditafsirkan sebagai hak-hak untuk melakukan separasi atau hak-hak untuk memisahkan diri dari suatu negara di mana mereka telah meleburkan diri, dilebur, atau terlebur ke dalam suatu negara yang lebih besar. Di sinilah, pluralisme dan multikulturalisme dianggap menjadi ancaman nasionalisme. Kecuali, hak-hak untuk menyelenggarakan pemerintahan sendiri tersebut dalam bingkai federalisme—tetap dalam bingkai wilayah

negara federal. Pertanyaannya kemudian adalah: apa dampak multikulturalisme dan pluralisme bagi kehidupan keberagamaan di Indonesia?

Di Indonesia, dikembangkannya multikulturalisme dan pluralisme dianggap kompetitor agama-agama; atau setidaknya dianggap mencederai agama. Multikulturalisme dan pluralisme disamakan dengan relativisme agama; sehingga harus ditolak. Karena itu, agama-agama—terutama agama-agama samawi—yang bersifat misioner cenderung lebih protektif, bahkan menjadi lebih agresif terhadap pihak-pihak yang dirasa sebagai ancaman. Secara lebih mendalam, tentang dampak multikulturalisme dan pluralisme ini akan dibahas pada uraian tentang kritik dan tantangan multikulturalisme dan pluralisme berikut.

## **KRITIK DAN TANTANGAN MULTIKULTURALISME DAN PLURALISME**

Multikulturalisme dan pluralisme bukanlah konsep ideologi yang sempurna. Multikulturalisme dan pluralisme juga mempunyai banyak kelemahan dan kekurangan. Selain konsepsinya yang dianggap bermasalah oleh kelompok-kelompok tertentu, praktik-praktik multikulturalisme dan pluralisme juga menghadapi berbagai kritik dan tantangan. Bahkan, multikulturalisme dan pluralisme juga mendapat penolakan dari kelompok-kelompok sosial tertentu. Tentang hal tersebut akan kita bahas dalam paparan berikut:

### **Penolakan oleh Kelompok Ismefobia**

Di mana pun, dan pada bangsa mana pun, hampir selalu ada kelompok-kelompok tertentu, umumnya dari kelompok-kelompok keagamaan yang terpapar ismefobia. Isme-isme politiko-religius, seperti: pluralisme, multikulturalisme, sinkretisme, liberalisme, sekularisme, relativisme, dan lain-lain, acap kali diposisikan sebagai kompetitor yang mengancam agama dan keberagamaan mereka. Hal tersebut terjadi akibat pemahaman yang sempit atas isme-isme yang berkembang di masyarakat. Mereka memahami isme-isme tersebut sebagai aliran-aliran keyakinan yang terkait dengan relasi-relasi eksistensial manusia dengan Sang Penciptanya. Dengan demikian, aliran-aliran pemikiran itu dianggap mengganggu dan berpotensi merusak agama dan keberagamaan mereka. Penolakan Majelis Ulama Indonesia dan insan-insan akademik tertentu yang berpikiran sempit, parsial, dan stereotip di Indonesia terhadap

pluralisme adalah contoh yang sangat konkret soal ini.<sup>13</sup> Salah satu alasan mereka adalah: pluralisme dalam agama dan keberagamaan dikhawatirkan akan mendesakralisasi dan merelativisasi kebenaran agama. Menanggapi soal ini, dalam “*Argumen Islam untuk Pluralisme: Islam Progresif dan Perkembangan Diskursusnya*”, Budhy Munawar-Rachman—salah seorang pemikir keagamaan di Indonesia—mengemukakan bahwa, “dari sudut pandang fatwa MUI, pluralisme dianggap sebagai ancaman teologis terhadap Islam.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Penolakan oleh Kelompok Mayoritas Dominan**

Baik kelompok agama maupun kelompok etnis yang besar, dominan, dan mapan, umumnya memiliki kecenderungan untuk menolak pluralisme dan multikulturalisme. Bagi kelompok-kelompok atau golongan-golongan keagamaan, luruhnya klaim-klaim kebenaran mutlak agama-agama selalu menjadi alasan mengapa mereka melakukan penolakan. Sebab, dengan pluralisme dan multikulturalisme, di dunia ini menjadi tidak ada lagi agama yang lebih benar dari agama lain. Tiap-tiap agama memiliki kebenarannya sendiri-sendiri; dan harus diterima apa adanya dengan kebenarannya masing-masing.

Dalam kehidupan keagamaan, pluralisme dan multikulturalisme sebenarnya juga bukan sesuatu yang baru. Dalam Islam, misalnya. Sebagaimana dikemukakan Nur Syam (2009: 60–61) dan Maarif (2021: 192–209), pada zaman Nabi Muhammad SAW, pluralisme telah menjadi nyata dalam kehidupan-bersama umat manusia. Melalui Piagam Madinah—yang antara lain berisi hak-hak asasi manusia, hak dan kewajiban bernegara, hak perlindungan hukum, dan toleransi beragama—Nabi Muhammad telah mengaktualisasikan apa yang sekarang kita sebut pluralisme dan multikulturalisme dalam kebijakan-kebijakannya. Dengan Piagam Madinah, Nabi Muhammad mengakui dan melindungi pemeluk-pemeluk agama lain; serta menjamin persamaan dan kebebasan kepada mereka dalam mengurus kepentingan keagamaan mereka. Masalahnya adalah: dalam perkembangan selanjutnya, tidak semua orang

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<sup>13</sup> Seperti makna pluralisme yang begitu luas, pluralisme agama juga memiliki pandangan yang cukup luas. Pluralisme agama tidak hanya berpandangan bahwa, tidak ada satu kelompok keagamaan mana pun yang berhak mengklaim agamanya yang paling benar; tetapi juga menyangkut penerimaan kelompok keagamaan tertentu terhadap agama-agama lain yang berbeda keyakinannya. Menurut kaum pluralis, semua agama memiliki kebenarannya masing-masing.

<sup>14</sup> Suhadi Cholil (ed.) *Resonansi Dialog Agama dan Budaya: dari Kebebasan Beragama, Pendidikan Multikultural, Sampai RUU Anti Pornografi*, Yogyakarta: CRCS, 2008

beragama dapat dan bersedia menerimanya; termasuk kalangan terdidik sekali pun.

Cuma anehnya, penolakan terhadap pluralisme dan multi-kulturalisme yang dilakukan oleh akademisi di perguruan tinggi tertentu dengan membenturkannya dengan peradaban Barat. Kutipan dari artikel Journal yang ditulis oleh Kholit Karomi berikut adalah salah satunya:

“Gerakan pluralisme merupakan salah satu dari penerapan liberalisasi pemikiran yang diprakarsai Barat. Tujuan liberalisasi sendiri adalah penyebaran nilai-nilai Barat untuk mempermudah praktik kolonialisasi. Demi ‘memuluskan’ liberalisasi ini kemudian digunakanlah ‘jubah’ pembaharuan pemikiran Islam, di mana ilmu-ilmu tradisional Islam dimasuki paham, konsep, sistem, dan cara pandang asing, seperti liberalisme, sekularisme, pluralisme agama, relativisme, feminimisme, gender, dan lain sebagainya. Inilah ‘pembaharuan pemikiran Islam’ yang justru menghasilkan dekonstruksi nilai-nilai Islam. Dengan pluralisme agama inilah umat Islam digiring untuk tidak meyakini kebenaran agamanya, atau paling tidak, sudah tidak mengklaim bahwa agamanya paling benar.”<sup>15</sup>

Dalam kehidupan antaretnis atau antarsuku juga begitu. Suku-suku tertentu yang merasa terancam oleh pluralisme dan multikulturalisme—karena berdasarkan pengalamannya, pluralisme dan multikulturalisme mengakibatkan komunitasnya terdesak, tergeser, dan tergusur—juga cenderung menolaknya. Penolakan-penolakan seperti ini, menurut saya, layak menjadi keprihatinan kita bersama sebagai bagian dari komunitas yang mendambakan kerukunan, ketenteraman, keadilan, dan kemakmuran dalam kehidupan bersama.

### **Kritik dan Penolakan oleh Kalangan Pribumi**

Pluralisme dan multikulturalisme mestinya tidak hanya memperjuangkan hak dan kepentingan golongan-golongan minoritas budaya imigran, tetapi juga golongan-golongan atau bangsa-bangsa pribumi yang menjadi minoritas di negara-negara modern. Oleh karena itu, ketika pluralisme dan multikulturalisme tidak

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<sup>15</sup> Kholid Karomi adalah Dosen Fakultas Ushuluddin ISID Gontor, Ponorogo. Lihat Kholit Karomi, 2014. Penolakan Ibnu Arabi terhadap Pluralisme Agama, dalam Jurnal Khalimah Vol. 12, No. 1, Maret 2014. <https://ejournal.unida.gontor.ac.id/index.php/kalimah/article/view/218/210>

bekerja sebagaimana mestinya, ketegangan-ketegangan sosial dan bahkan konflik berdarah akan terjadi. Belajar dari kasus Indonesia, di beberapa tempat, kekhawatiran seperti ini sudah menjadi kenyataan. Peristiwa Timor Timur pada November 1991; Pertikaian antaretnis yang terjadi di Sanggau Ledo Kalimantan Barat pada tahun 1995-1997; Kekerasan berdarah yang melibatkan suku Dayak dan suku Madura di Sampit, Kota Waringin Timur, dan Pontianak, Kalimantan Tengah pada tahun 2000; Konflik Poso, Sulawesi Tengah, pada tahun 2000-2001; Peristiwa Kerusuhan di Lampung tahun 2012 yang melibatkan etnis Bali dan etnis Lampung; adalah dan hanyalah beberapa di antaranya. Semua peristiwa itu, jika dirunut ke belakang, dilatarbelakangi oleh pergerakan penduduk besar-besaran pada waktu-waktu sebelumnya, baik melalui program transmigrasi yang diprakarsai pemerintah maupun melalui migrasi penduduk secara mandiri. Masalahnya adalah: selain mereka kemudian mengambil-alih dominasi ekonomi, mereka juga membawa budaya primordialnya masing-masing. Berdasarkan data yang ada, sebagian besar dari mereka adalah pendatang dari Jawa; dari Bali pada kasus Lampung, dan dari Madura pada kasus Sampit (Mas'ued, dkk., 2001).

Dari peristiwa-peristiwa di atas, tampak jelas bahwa, pluralisme dan multikulturalisme ternyata kurang baik dan tidak menguntungkan bagi suku-bangsa pribumi karena implikasinya adalah peminggiran komunitas dan kebudayaan tradisi mereka. Celakanya lagi, para migran umumnya bergerombol membentuk perkampungan-perkampungan eksklusif dengan adat istiadat, agama, dan seluruh pernik budaya mereka. Hal tersebut, tentu saja, memunculkan kesenjangan dan ketegangan-ketegangan budaya yang memicu bangkitnya semangat primordialisme yang cenderung merendahkan, meminggirkan, menghancurkan, dan menegasikan budaya-budaya yang berbeda dengan budaya primordialnya.

Dalam konteks Indonesia, yang menjadi keprihatinan kita, selain yang disebutkan di atas, kasus-kasus serupa berpotensi terjadi di mana-mana; salah satunya di Papua. Menurut beberapa mahasiswa asal Papua yang saya wawancarai, saat ini penduduk Papua telah didominasi oleh para pendatang dari luar Papua. Jumlah penduduk OAP (orang asli Papua) lebih sedikit ketimbang para pendatang. Bahkan, para pendatang lah yang menguasai bidang-bidang strategis; tidak hanya dalam bidang ekonomi, tetapi juga



dalam bidang politik dan sosial kemasyarakatan lainnya. Karena itu, tidak mengherankan jika dalam politik, anggota-anggota Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah lebih didominasi oleh para pendatang ketimbang orang-orang asli Papua. Saya pikir, itu semua adalah kelemahan dari kebijakan-kebijakan publik yang berspirit pluralisme dan multikulturalisme, seperti program transmigrasi, yang diambil Pemerintah Orde Baru sejak tahun 1970-an. Peristiwa-peristiwa di atas adalah bukti konkret kelemahan pluralisme dan multikulturalisme, yang mengakibatkan pendesakan, penggeseran, dan peminggiran penduduk pribumi.

### **Kritik dan Penolakan oleh Kaum Feminis**

Bagi kalangan feminis, multikulturalisme dinilai turut meminggirkan, atau setidaknya tidaknya mendukung peminggiran, kaum perempuan. Dalam memperjuangkan hak hidup golongan-golongan budaya—termasuk di dalamnya agama dan organisasi keagamaannya, multikulturalisme mencarikan perlindungan bagi golongan-golongan atau organisasi-organisasi berpraktik seksis yang merugikan perempuan. Sebagaimana dikemukakan Gaus dan Kukathas (2004), penilaian kritis tersebut terutama dikemukakan oleh Susan Okin (1998; 1999a; 1999b; dan 2002) yang dengan keras menentang para pendukung multikulturalisme yang tidak memiliki komitmen pada hak-hak kaum perempuan.

Kritik Susan Okin tersebut tentu bukan tanpa alasan. Sebagaimana yang kita diskusikan di atas, multikulturalisme memberikan hak hidup dan jaminan terhadap kebudayaan-kebudayaan tradisional, serta menuntut setiap individu dan/atau kelompok sosial untuk menghormati setiap kebudayaan tradisional seperti apa adanya—termasuk di dalamnya kebudayaan-kebudayaan tradisional yang tidak memberikan hak dan persamaan kesempatan kepada kaum perempuan sekali pun. Padahal, hampir seluruh kebudayaan tradisional bangsa-bangsa di muka bumi menempatkan perempuan pada posisi sebagai manusia kelas dua. Dengan jargon-jargon sosio-kultural, kebudayaan-kebudayaan tradisional dengan terang-terangan menempatkan kaum perempuan sebagai manusia kelas dua. Ironisnya, agama-agama Samawi yang banyak dianut warga dunia pun juga memosisikan perempuan di bawah kelas dan dominasi laki-laki. Saya kira, di antara kita—para akademisi, para teolog, para aktivis gerakan perempuan, dan para aktivis gerakan penegakan hak-hak asasi manusia—tidak ada yang berkeberatan soal ini.

Dalam konteks kebudayaan-kebudayaan tradisional Indonesia, yang di dalamnya terdapat lebih dari 300-an budaya suku (budaya tradisional), dapat dikatakan bahwa, tidak satu pun di antara mereka yang tidak menempatkan perempuan pada posisi kedua—sebagai warga kelas dua, sebagai subordinat laki-laki. Bahkan, kebudayaan Minang yang disebut-sebut bercorak matrilineal pun, melalui *Ninik Mamak*,<sup>16</sup> pada kenyataannya juga menempatkan perempuan pada posisi kedua, khususnya dalam proses-proses pengambilan keputusan di lingkungan masyarakat adat mereka. Itulah sebabnya mengapa kaum feminis radikal sangat berkeberatan dan cenderung berseberangan dengan multikulturalisme—sebagaimana diungkapkan Katha Pollit (1999) bahwa, dalam menuntut kesetaraan bagi perempuan, feminisme memosisikan diri berseberangan dengan hampir semua kebudayaan tradisional di muka bumi.<sup>17</sup>

### **Kritik Kaum Liberal Terhadap Pluralisme dan Multikulturalisme**

Dari sisi keberpihakannya, pluralisme dan multikulturalisme mempunyai kesamaan dengan liberalisme. Baik pluralisme, multikulturalisme, maupun liberalisme merupakan ideologi yang berdasarkan pada pemahaman bahwa persamaan hak adalah nilai utama kehidupan-bersama manusia yang harus diperjuangkan. Masalahnya adalah: menurut para liberalis pencerahan—para penganut pandangan liberalisme yang muncul pada abad pencerahan, sekitar awal abad ke-16, yang menekankan pentingnya kebebasan individu—pluralisme dan multikulturalisme dinilai tidak konsisten dengan liberalisme, karena keduanya memberi respek kepada nilai-nilai sosial serta menghargai keanekaragaman. Padahal, kaum liberal dengan tegas menyatakan bahwa mereka lebih mendukung individualitas daripada keanekaragaman.

Sebagaimana dikemukakan Kukathas (2004), kritik kaum liberal terhadap multikulturalisme tersebut, antara lain, dikemukakan oleh Brian Berry melalui bukunya yang berjudul *Culture and Equality*

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<sup>16</sup> *Ninik Mamak* adalah lembaga adat Minangkabau yang terdiri atas beberapa orang penghulu yang berasal dari berbagai klan yang ada dalam suku-suku di Minangkabau. Lembaga ini diisi oleh para pemimpin klan—yang semuanya laki-laki—yang disebut penghulu. Jabatan penghulu diwariskan secara turun-temurun sesuai adat matrilineal Minangkabau. Jabatan penghulu selalu dipangku oleh seorang laki-laki Minangkabau yang dituakan dan dipandang mampu memimpin dengan bijaksana. ([https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ninik\\_Mamak](https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ninik_Mamak)).

<sup>17</sup> Lihat Katha Pollit. 1999. *Whose Culture? in Is Multiculturalism Bad for Woman?* Edited by Susan Moller Okin, Published by: Princeton University Press.

(2001). Menurut Berry, liberalisme Reformasi William Galston yang, antara lain, menyatakan bahwa teori liberal menghargai rasa hormat kepada orang-orang pribadi—yang dengan demikian mengisyaratkan rasa hormat kepada kebudayaan yang dianut individu; dan yang menyatakan bahwa, liberalisme menghargai keanekaragaman karena keanekaragaman menambah ragam pilihan bagi individu, tidaklah masuk akal. Berry berpendapat bahwa, kebudayaan yang tidak liberal sebagaimana yang digariskan liberalisme pencerahan, serta sering melanggar syarat persamaan rasa hormat, tidak pantas untuk dihormati.

## **MULTIKULTURALISME-PLURALISME SEBAGAI SOLUSI**

Dari uraian di atas, tampak jelas bahwa, dalam masyarakat yang multikultural dan pluralistik, jika menginginkan kehidupan-bersama yang rukun, adil, damai, dan sejahtera, aktualisasi dan pengembangan kebijakan yang berpijak pada spirit multikulturalisme dan pluralisme merupakan keniscayaan. Dengan segala kelebihan dan kekurangannya, multikulturalisme dan pluralisme adalah satu-satunya solusi yang menjamin terciptanya kehidupan-bersama yang rukun, adil, damai, dan sejahtera. Itu berarti, dalam masyarakat yang multikultural dan pluralistik, multikulturalisme dan pluralisme adalah suatu keharusan; bukan sebuah pilihan.

Tanpa multikulturalisme dan pluralisme, harapan berbagai kalangan akan masyarakat plural dan multikultural yang rukun, adil, damai, dan sejahtera tidak akan pernah menjadi realita; dan kehidupan-bersama umat manusia akan terus diwarnai oleh ketegangan-ketegangan dan konflik-konflik sosial yang disebabkan oleh perbedaan-perbedaan primordialistik yang ada di dalamnya, seperti perbedaan suku, ras, agama, adat istiadat, dan lain sebagainya. Masalahnya adalah: untuk mewujudkan gagasan dan keinginan tersebut, multikulturalisme dan pluralisme mensyaratkan beberapa kondisi yang tidak mudah diwujudkan, antara lain: *Pertama*, multikulturalisme dan pluralisme menuntut kesediaan setiap individu dan/atau kelompok-kelompok sosial yang ada untuk dapat menerima, menghargai, dan menghormati individu-individu atau kelompok-kelompok sosial lain yang secara rasial, etnisitas, adat istiadat, dan keseluruhan pernik-pernik budayanya berbeda dengan diri dan budayanya. *Kedua*, sebagaimana telah disinggung di atas, multikulturalisme dan

pluralisme menuntut adanya moderasi struktur-struktur sosial dan lembaga-lembaga sosial yang ada di dalamnya; *Ketiga*, dalam masyarakat tidak boleh ada lagi klasifikasi sosial atas dasar ikatan-ikatan dan sifat-sifat primordialistiknya. Artinya, dalam masyarakat yang multikultur dan pluralistik tidak boleh ada lagi kelompok sosial yang dianggap lebih rendah atau lebih tinggi atas dasar ras, kesukuan, bahasa, adat istiadat, dan lain sebagainya; dan *Keempat*, dalam komunitas sosial multikultur dan pluralistik yang menegara, multikulturalisme dan pluralisme menuntut komitmen Penguasa—pemerintah dan seluruh jajarannya—untuk terus mengupayakan, menjaga, dan merawat kebersamaan, dengan mengembangkan dan memberlakukan kebijakan-kebijakan publik yang berperspektif pluralisme dan multikulturalisme.

## CATATAN PENUTUP

Untuk menutup artikel singkat ini, sekali lagi, saya ingin menegaskan bahwa, dalam kehidupan-bersama manusia yang plural dan multikultur, apalagi kehidupan-bersama yang dibayang-bayangi meningkatnya perkembangan kelompok-kelompok intoleran seperti di Indonesia, pluralisme dan multikulturalisme mutlak diperlukan. Tanpa itu, kehidupan-bersama kita akan terus diwarnai oleh ketegangan-ketegangan dan konflik-konflik sosial yang tidak perlu dan sama sekali tidak produktif.

Memang benar, sebagaimana dikemukakan di atas, pluralisme dan multikulturalisme memiliki kekurangan-kekurangan. Karena itu, dan untuk itu, memikirkan dan mengupayakan hal-hal apa saja yang dapat menutup kekurangan-kekurangan pluralisme dan multikulturalisme adalah pekerjaan rumah kita—terutama yang mendambakan kehidupan-bersama seluruh umat manusia yang rukun, damai, adil, dan sejahtera. *Wallahualam!*

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# **INTERCULTURALISM IN A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE AND THE REALITY OF THE CHURCH IN THE CONTEXT OF GKI IN PAPUA**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Church is a congregation of believers. This congregation is not built on the grounds of grouping or ethnicity as the Church is a congregation of the faithful from ethnic, national, and linguistic background who profess Jesus Christ as the Lord and the Head of the Church. On the basis of Christ, this diversity is transformed into a congregation. Thus, this diversity should not be made into an obstacle for the continuity of *koinonia* (congregation). Differences should become a force from which to reveal the greatness of God and His free will to call and gather those who believe in Him. However, the ongoing phenomena occurring in the lives of many Christians is the issue of ethnic, tribal, and class differentiation has become the trigger for discord within the Church (read: Body of Christ). From this issue arises the interests of various ethnicities and groups.

Based upon the recognition of the ongoing phenomena within the Church, thus this journal seeks to examine interculturalism within a Biblical perspective, both in the Old, and New Testaments

which can then be made into a principle for living together (in diversity) as a Church is a congregation of Believers that is not limited by affiliations or ethnicities.

**Formulation of the Issue:**

1. How can the understanding of interculturalism within the Church be understood Biblically?
2. To what extent has this view been realized by GKI in Papua

## **II. INTERCULTURALISM WITHIN THE BIBLE**

### **II.1. Interculturalism in the reality of the Nation of Israel during the Old Testament**

Relationships between cultures are not something new. Humans as social creatures have always lived in relationships with others. Whether internally within the same tribe, or outside the tribe. The Old Testament specifically illustrates how relationships between cultures occurred through the relationships of the ancestors of the Israelites or the ancestors with the non-believing nations around them,<sup>1</sup> like Abraham who fled to Egypt to live there as a foreigner due to the Great Famine (Genesis 12:10) or Isaac who went to Gerar to Abimelech, King of the Philistines as a way to escape starvation, or Jacob who fled to Mesopotamia to protect himself from his brother, Esau's jealousy, caused by the blessing given by his father (Isaac). Other relationships are also shown through the story of Joseph who was sold to Egypt and became a Vizier within the Pharaoh's Court.

The descriptions of such relationships illustrate the fact that prior to their enslavement in Egypt, Israelites possessed good relationships with foreign nations and with nations surrounding them. Relationships between ancestors and the non-believing nations as mentioned above certainly brought impacts both negative, and positive. The positive impacts are how the ancestors were able to learn about the traditions, religions, and cultures of the nations surrounding Israel. From these encounters, a lifestyle that is not solely based upon Israeli culture was birthed. The other nation's helped shape Israel's identity as a nation that had a certain pattern and way of life. Israel's identity as God's chosen nation that was sanctified did

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<sup>1</sup> <http://journal.driyarkara.ac.id/index.php/diskursus/article/view/91> (22-05-2021).

not necessarily separate the nation of Israel from the nations around it. As a nation that had just experienced life together and had just changed patterns from a nomadic to a settled way of life when they were in Canaan, thus the Israelites did not see the presence of the surrounding nations as foreign to them. They recognize the strength of the surrounding nations and also imitate their way of life, such as religion, agriculture, animal husbandry, and so on.

In the field of religion, concrete evidence is found regards the system of sacrifice in Israel. Scholars agree that the rites of sacrifice were taken in large part from the Canaanites, after the Israelites had settled the Canaan lands.<sup>2</sup>

Martin Theodorus Mawene shows another aspect of an impact of interculturalism of the Israelites regarding wisdom. Mawene states that elements of wisdom from neighboring nations has influenced the traditions of wisdom in Israel.<sup>3</sup> This is evidenced through the formulation of moral codes of the ancient Israelites who were influenced by the traditions of the Canaanites and Mesopotamians.<sup>4</sup> K. Van der Toorn as quoted by Mawene grouped the views of ancient peoples in Southwest Asia into five moral orders in the form of apodictics, as also formulated in the Dasatitah (Exodus 20:12-16), namely: (i) Duty and respect to parents, (ii) the prohibition of bloodshed amongst people, (iii) the prohibition of adultery/fornication, (iv) the prohibition of theft, and (v) prohibition of giving false testimony.<sup>5</sup>

The impact of interculturalism of the Israelites with other nations is also evident during the reign of Solomon where there was a need to reorganize the Kingdom's political life and administration which was viewed by Solomon as being paramount to the point Solomon took crucial steps in this field by bringing in scholars from Egypt for the needs of the Israeli Kingdom during his reign.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> H.H Rowley, *Ibadat Israel Kuno*, Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1983, hal 87.

<sup>3</sup> Marthinus Theodorus Mawene, *Relasi Torah dan Hikmat dalam Perjanjian Lama: suatu uraian secara historis* dalam Kees de Jong dan Yusak Tridarmanto, (Ed), *Teologi dalam silang Budaya: Menguak makna Teologi dalam Interkultural serta perannya bagi upaya berolah Teologi di tengah-tengah pluralisme masyarakat Indonesia*, Yogyakarta: Yayasan Taman Pustaka Kristen Indonesia dan Fakultas Teologi Universitas Kristen Indonesia, 2015, hal 81

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, hal 87

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, hal 90



The general description as shown above proves to us that the relationships of the Israelites shared with their neighbors has had great influence in their lives. These relationships also give us an answer showing that the nation of Israel since the forefathers have shared good relations with other nations. However, this does not mean that the relationships clouded their status as a nation that still maintains their identity as God's chosen nation. Their identity as God's chosen nation becomes a principle that is maintained even though they lived side by side with other nations.

## **II.2 Interculturalism in the New Testament: Seeing Samaritans through the eyes of Jesus.**

The model of Jesus's mission and ministry on Earth is one that embraces diversity. At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus read the scroll of the Book of Isaiah to minister to the poor, free captives, and help the oppressed. Jesus claimed that "the Scriptures were fulfilled" in Himself (Luke 4:14-21). Of course, the poor, captive, and oppressed were not only in the Jewish community, but also those beyond the borders of territories, tribes, and foreign nations around Palestine.

Despite Jesus' 12 apostles hailing from the same ethnicity, Jesus' ministry was one that embraced diversity. He undertook journeys that surpassed the scope of Israel. Jesus met with a Roman centurion with great faith (Matthew 8:10), his encounter with a Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24), and some Samaritans (John 4, Luke 10:25, 17:16).

This is proof that Jesus ministered to all people, regardless of their background. His ministry shows involvement, compassion, love, acceptance, and forgiveness for people from all backgrounds and walks of life.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, in examining how Jesus views interculturalism and diversity, the author will discuss Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman. (John 4).

### *1. The beginning of the Judeo-Samaritan conflict*

Samaritans are half Jewish, half non-Jewish. This race emerged after the Assyrians were captured by the northern kingdom

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<sup>7</sup> Scott RIDOUT, "New Testament: Bible verses about diversity" <https://converge.org/article/new-testament-bible-verses-about-diversity> (27-04-2021)

of Israel in 721 BC. The Israelites then intermarried with the Assyrians resulting in the Samaritans.<sup>8</sup>

In the time of the Lord Jesus, the Jews in Palestine lived apart from the Samaritans. Samaria is between the northern Galilee and Judea, and south of Jerusalem. Actually, the shortest route for Jews to go north from Jerusalem or south from Galilee was through Samaria. However, for hundreds of years the Jews and the Samaritans lived in enmity. They do not agree where God's people should worship. For Jews, the place to worship God was in the Temple in Jerusalem, whereas for the Samaritans had made their own place for worship. Their place of worship is on Mount Gerizim. The Jews and Samaritans hated each other. Most Jews did not want to travel through Samaria. The Jews were even willing to take longer routes to avoid direct contact with the Samaritans.<sup>9</sup>

It is interesting to note that the Jews viewed the Samaritans as a splinter rather than as non-believers,<sup>10</sup> but their disagreement over where to worship God led to them a strife and hatred, even leading the Jews to consider Samaritans as second-class citizens (as Samaritans who were also Jews who had betrayed their ancestry and chosen to intermarry with Assyrians thus no longer maintaining the purity of their Jewish blood).

According to Brill, Samaritans were descendants of Jews and the Assyrians who were stationed in Samaria after the Israelites were taken captive in Assyria. They continued to worship their gods, but also worshipped God with their idols. After the Jews were freed from captivity in the land of Babylon, they wanted to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, but Nehemiah refused their help. Thus, leading them to be against the Jews. Then the Samaritans built their own temple on Mount Gerizim. Their first priest was Manasseh who married a Persian woman. Their religion was half pagan and half Jewish. Therefore, the Jews hated them more than other nations who were truly pagan.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Don Stewart: Who were the Samaritans? : [https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don\\_stewart/don\\_stewart\\_1319.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_1319.cfm) (27-04-2021)

<sup>9</sup> Jews and Samaritans, <https://ccea.org.uk/downloads/docs/ccea-asset/Resource/Resource%208%20%E2%80%93%20Jews%20and%20Samaritans.pdf#:~:text=Jews%20and%20Samaritans%20hated%20each,do%20to%20receive%20eternal%20life%3F%E2%80%9D> (27-04-2021)

<sup>10</sup> *Ensiklopedia Alkitab Masa Kini*: Samaria, Orang. Hal. 352

<sup>11</sup> J. Wesley BRILL, *Tafsiran Injil Yohanes* (Bandung: Yayasan Kalam Hidup), 49–50

This view then ordains the particularistic understanding: that salvation belongs only to the Jewish people, exclusive salvation because they are chosen people of God's covenant with their ancestors. However, this particularistic notion was challenged by the Lord Jesus (the Jew) when it was a hot day when he met the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.

2. *The Lord Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman*

In John chapter 4, the direction of the Lord Jesus' journey changes drastically. The Lord Jesus traveled from the center of the Jewish nation to the outskirts of Samaria. Thus, showing the Lord Jesus transcended the barriers of culture, ethnicity, gender, and social conventions.

On a hot and dry day, Jesus was thirsty and happened to meet a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well who was drawing water. The conversation begins when Jesus asks the Samaritan woman for a drink<sup>12</sup> while drawing water.<sup>13</sup> Apparently the response of the Samaritan woman was one of skepticism as she knew the relationship between her people and the Jews was not conducive. The Samaritan woman answered the Lord Jesus thus: "How can you, a Jew, ask me for a drink, a Samaritan?" There was a sense of confusion in the Samaritan woman's answer. As if she was stating "you Jews hate us, Samaritans; but should you be thirsty, you ask for our help."<sup>14</sup> How did the Lord Jesus respond back, did the Lord Jesus feel insulted? Never. Because the encounter at Jacob's well is certainly not an encounter without meaning but an encounter that changes and restores.

The Lord Jesus in this chapter gives new value to the life of the Samaritan woman and shows her the way of salvation. The Lord Jesus' response is seen in verse 13. Jesus shows that human thirst cannot be satisfied by the water that exists in this world. The "thirst" of the human soul is a spiritual thirst. And that is why material things cannot quench this thirst.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> A woman collects water during the day – maybe as she is a certain type of woman thus collecting water at an unusual time compared to other women in the village: together during the morning hours – and is met by Jesus who stopped by the well, due to the apostles leaving to the village to buy lunch. St. Darmawijaya, (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1988), 51.

<sup>13</sup> Water, in these countries with a hot climate is crucial for humans. Thirst represented a signal from the human body that was losing bodily fluids, with extreme thirst possibly causing death. R.H. Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 121

<sup>14</sup> J. Wesley BRILL, *Tafsiran Injil Yohanes* (Bandung: Yayasan Kalam Hidup), 50

<sup>15</sup> A.W. PINK, *Tafsiran Injil Yohanes* (Surabaya: Yakin, 1945), 69

The Lord Jesus tried to awaken curiosity in the woman's heart. "If you knew..." (Verse 10). Jesus recognized the woman's spiritual need, so He offered living water to her. Then the woman began to say respectfully: "Lord, you have no bucket and the well is very deep (verse 11) ... are you greater than our father Jacob?" (Verse 12). The woman did not understand that Jesus was talking about living water, which is a spiritual matter. She thought Jesus would give her the drinking water that he had just asked for. Jesus replied that He gave water that rises like springs, which bring eternal life.

Jesus wanted the woman to understand that what He had given her was of a spiritual nature that quenches a person's heart and soul. Obvious from her response (verse 15), the woman had not yet understood what Jesus meant. Jesus had to clarify the meaning of "living water" that he was referring to. As if Jesus had stated "I possess the living water that you are seeking, but there is something in your life that must be completed first; go home and call your husband." Jesus' words had pierced her heart. "I don't have a husband," she responded (verse 17). She did not wish for her life to be investigated by a Jew. The Lord Jesus remained patient and stated: "your words are true ...as you already have five husbands," (verse 17 - 18). Then the woman realized that she could not hide anything from Jesus, who had just unmasked her.

The Samaritan woman did not wish for her sins to be further investigated; she then changed the conversation to religion (verse 20). In regards the place of worship, is it on Mount Gerizim or in Jerusalem? Jesus sought to teach her the proper way of worship (verse 21 - 24). Jesus emphasized that worship is not a matter of place, and the pointlessness of the arguments between the Jews and the Samaritans regarding the places of worship. When Jesus mentioned that worship must be done in spirit and in truth, He speaks of it regardless of time and place (verse 24).

The Samaritan woman then responds back and states in verse 25: "I know that the Messiah will come ..." Her words express ignorance and hope. Even though she was a sinner, she still waited for the Messiah, the Light of the world. It was evident that her heart was thirsty for the living water. Jesus said, "I am Him," the Messiah. The woman believed for the first time. Then Jesus began to reveal Himself to the woman

more than He had revealed to Nicodemus. Jesus wanted the Samaritan woman to believe in Him.

3. *The Samaritan woman's response after meeting with the Lord Jesus*

After conversing with Jesus, the Samaritan woman then became one who was fervent in the Lord. Her response was evident when she went out of town and talked to the inhabitants, "could He be the Christ?" The witness of the Samaritan woman and the Lord Jesus' word caused many Samaritans to believe that he was the Messiah of the Earth (verse 41–42).

Jesus' embrace of other nations (read: Samaritans) is in contrast to that of the Jews who hated the Samaritans. The Jews believe that salvation is of a particular nature. But Jesus has already erased any preconception by coming to a Samaritan woman. In contrast with the particularistic understanding, it appears that universal salvation that is brought with Jesus comes for all nations, tribes, and language, simply, Jesus came to save the Earth.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, there are 2 crucial lessons contained in the encounter between the Lord Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

1. *The Lord Jesus comes for all nations, races, and languages.*

The Jews hated the Samaritans, to the point that the Jews' hatred towards other nations did not match their hatred towards Samaritans. But Jesus broke the prejudice of the Jews and came to a Samaritan woman in the middle of a hot day. Jesus shows that the Gospel is not only aimed at the Jews but to all nations, races, and languages. Additionally, this encounter shows that the Lord's mercy is not bound by human traditions, cultures, or religious practices, rather His mercy transcends all boundaries.

2. *The encounter changed the lives of the Samaritan woman, and the Samaritans.*

The Lord Jesus' encounter changed the life of the Samaritan woman. She initially viewed herself as worthless. She always collected her water during the day at Jacob's well so as to avoid other women who would normally collect their water during the morning or afternoon hours of the day, and suddenly she had become spirited, and full of joy and cheerfulness to announce the news of her encounter

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<sup>16</sup> J. Wesley BRILL, *Tafsiran Injil Yohanes* (Bandung: Yayasan Kalam Hidup), 51–52

with the Lord Jesus. How was the response of the many people that she had met in the city? The Bible mentions in John 4:42 “We believe, not because of what you say, as we have already heard of Him ourselves and we know, He truly is the Messiah of the Earth.”

Ultimately, the Lord Jesus’ discussion with the Samaritan woman is an example of the mission of evangelism directed to outsiders. This service pattern is a service model that dares one to get out of the comfort zone and go to unfriendly places. It also implicitly challenges the church to go out of it to preach the gospel: crossing boundaries, with outsiders and non-believers. Carson (1991: 232) stated that the Samaritan mission was an intercultural mission carried out by the Lord Jesus as the first missionary. This paradigm needs to be followed by the Church. This is stated in Acts 1:8.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”<sup>17</sup>

### III. CONCLUSION

In the GKI Church’s Administration and Regulations in Papua, chapter 1 article 1 states that the Gereja Kristen Injili (Evangelical Christian Church) in Papua is an association of Kristen Injili (Evangelical Christians) congregations in Papua.<sup>18</sup>

It seems that the predecessors of the Evangelical Christian Church in Papua (hereinafter GKI DI-TP) have anticipated the future regarding the church’s diversity meaning that the church does not only consist of one ethnicity/tribe rather consisting of various ethnicities. It is not exaggerated to write that in chapter I article 3.1 of the Church Order, it is clearly stated that: The area of service of the Evangelical Christian Church in Papua is Papua. This view emphasises that GKI DI-TP will not be established outside the territory of Papua, meaning: if there are GKI DI-TP residents who move from

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<sup>17</sup> Ricardo SMUTS (Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (John 4:1–42): A Paradigmatic Encounter for Discipleship [μαθητεία] and Witness [μαρτυρία], (<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/196259595.pdf>) (27-04-2021)

<sup>18</sup> Tata Gereja dan Peraturan-Peraturan Gereja Kristen Injili di Tanah Papua (Jayapura: Badan Pekerja Am Sinode, 2007), 3.

their domicile of Papua, they automatically become members of a local church that shares the same principles as GKI DI-TP.

The author (Pdt. MM Wospakrik) when she was away from Papua, was once invited to a group to discuss with a group of young people to build a GKI DI-TP in the area (which there were indeed many students from Papua there), but the author firmly rejected this request due to the basis of recognition in the GKI DI-TP's Administration.

Does interculturalism represent a threat to the earthly Church? By accepting diversity and ultimately rejecting the local church's identity? The reality, GKI DI-TP does not ignore the spirit of the earthly church (contextually/intellectually) or denies diversity.

The reality is a number of followers in the GKI DI-TP environment when celebrating important ecclesiastical holidays displays a contextual church spirit by showing elements of Papuan culture in the liturgy of worship, as was done by the Sentani class in celebrating the 64<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of GKI DI-TP (in 2020). The liturgy of worship and sermons were delivered in the Sentani language throughout the GKI DI-TP congregations in the Sentani class.

But also in the spirit of diversity on ecclesiastical holidays, worship in the cultural elements of GKI DI-TP residents from outside Papua was performed, as exemplified by GKI Martin Luther's congregation in the Sentani class. The Congregational Council and PHRG (Ecclesiastical Day Committee) designed ecclesiastical services throughout 2019 with the spirit of a multiethnic church, amongst others, including: the PI (Gospel Message) Anniversary service that was celebrated in the spirit of Papuan ethnicity, Pentecostal service in the spirit of Maluku ethnicity, the GKI DI-TP Anniversary service in the spirit of the Batak ethnicity, the Congregation's Christmas service in the spirit of the Toraja ethnicity. The same thing was done by GKI I.S. Kijne, Port Numbay class in celebrating the 2<sup>nd</sup> Pentecost, along with many other congregations.

Carrying out multiethnic services is certainly not an easy feat, as there were some members of the congregation who refused to be present in the mentioned ecclesiastical services due to their understanding that GKI DI-TP is not a tribal/ethnic congregation, or the idea that a number of church members had opined regards services should show the spirit of the church in the context (Papua) and not the other way around.

Contrasting from the pros and cons mentioned above, thus it is evident that correct hermeneutics are required regarding the existence of the church as a congregation of Believers who understand each other while seeing diversity as a strength and a part of the church's identity.

This represents a serious challenge in how ethnic diversity in the context of GKI DI-TP does not dissipate the congregation's original Papuan identity within the church and interprets GKI DI-TP as a church that must protect the existence of Papuan people within GKI DI-TP, as experienced by the author (Pdt. K. Notanubun) when questioned by one of the other Pastors who is also a lecturer in one of the Theological Colleges outside of Papua: "*Why GKI DI-TP does not use the name of Gereja Kristen Papua (Papuan Christian Church) so as to clarify the Papuan features more visible within the church?*" This means that church diversity in a certain area as understood as the church possessing local followers. This is not wrong; however, we must realize that the church's existence in a given area does not mean the church is to be exclusive.

Identity is important, as Israel sees itself as God's chosen people, but that identity should not rule out the possibility of seeing openness as a church which is a congregation of Believers from various ethnicities and universal in its stance that Jesus was open and accepted the Samaritan woman as others.

This is where we are made aware to experience a change in mindset in an effort to live together in peace and harmony as a church.

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# **INTERKULTURAL DALAM PERSPEKTIF BIBLIS DAN REALITA BERGEREJA DALAM KONTEKS GKI DI TANAH PAPUA**

*Pdt. Dr. Martha M. Wospakrik, M.Th  
dan Pdt. Kristensia Notanubun, M.Th*

## **I. PENDAHULUAN**

Gereja adalah persekutuan orang-orang percaya. Persekutuan ini tidak dibangun atas kelompok dan etnis karena gereja adalah persekutuan orang-orang beriman dari latar belakang suku, bangsa, dan bahasa yang mengaku Yesus Kristus sebagai Tuhan dan Kepala Gereja. Di atas dasar Kristus, keberagaman itu terbentuk menjadi satu persekutuan. Ini berarti bahwa kepelbagaian itu jangan menjadi hambatan yang menghalangi keberlangsungan koinonia. Perbedaan seyogianya menjadi kekuatan yang daripadanya menampakkan kebesaran Allah dan kehendak bebas-Nya untuk memanggil dan menghimpun orang-orang yang percaya kepada-Nya. Namun fenomena yang terjadi dalam kehidupan orang Kristen sejauh ini adalah isu diferensiasi etnis, suku, dan golongan telah menjadi pemantik perpecahan dalam gereja (baca: tubuh Kristus). Dari isu inilah lahir kepentingan-kepentingan kelompok dan etnis.

Berdasarkan pengakuan dan fenomena yang terjadi di dalam gereja, maka tulisan ini hendak mengkaji interkultural menurut

pandangan Alkitab Perjanjian Lama dan Perjanjian Baru yang kemudian dapat dijadikan prinsip kehidupan bersama (dalam kepelbagaian) sebagai gereja yang adalah persekutuan orang-orang percaya yang tidak dibatasi oleh kelompok dan etnis.

**Rumusan Masalah:**

1. Bagaimana pemahaman interkultural gereja dapat dipahami secara biblis?
2. Sejauh mana pandangan ini terealisasi dalam GKI di Tanah Papua?

## **II. INTERKULTURAL DALAM ALKITAB**

### **II.1 Interkultural dalam realita Bangsa Israel pada masa Perjanjian Lama**

Relasi antarbudaya bukan hal yang baru. Manusia sebagai makhluk sosial selalu hidup berelasi dengan org lain. Apakah dengan sesama suku atau di luar sukunya. Alkitab Perjanjian Lama secara khusus menggambarkan tentang bagaimana hubungan antabudaya itu terjadi melalui relasi para nenek moyang Israel atau bapak leluhur dengan bangsa-bangsa kafir di sekitarnya,<sup>1</sup> seperti Abraham yang mengungsi ke Mesir untuk tinggal di situ sebagai orang Asing sebab hebat kelaparan di negeri itu (Kej. 12:10) atau Ishak yang pergi ke Garar kepada Abimelekh raja orang Filistin sebagai suatu tindakan yang dilakukan untuk keluar dari kelaparan yang dialami atau juga Yakub yang lari dari Mesopotamia untuk melindungi diri dari dendam kakaknya Esau karena berkat yang diberikan ayahnya (Ishak) kepadanya. Relasi lain juga terlihat pada kehadiran Yusuf yang dijual ke tanah Mesir dan menjadi penguasa atas Istana Firaun.

Gambaran-gambaran tentang relasi tersebut memperlihatkan bahwa sejak semula sebelum perbudakan di Mesir, bangsa Israel telah memiliki relasi yang baik dengan bangsa-bangsa asing atau dengan bangsa-bangsa sekitar. Relasi antara bapak leluhur dengan bangsa-bangsa kafir sebagaimana disebutkan di atas tentu membawa dampak positif dan dampak negatif. Dampak positifnya adalah para bapak leluhur itu belajar tentang tradisi dan agama serta budaya dari bangsa-bangsa

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<sup>1</sup> <http://journal.driyarkara.ac.id/index.php/diskursus/article/view/91> (22-05-2021)

di sekitar Israel. Dari perjumpaan itu, melahirkan pola hidup yang tidak hanya bertolak pada budaya Israel semata. Bangsa-bangsa lain itu ikut membentuk jati diri Israel sebagai suatu bangsa yang memiliki pola dan cara hidup tertentu. Identitas Israel sebagai bangsa pilihan Allah yang dikuduskan tidak serta-merta memisahkan bangsa Israel dari bangsa-bangsa di sekitarnya. Sebagai bangsa yang baru mengalami kehidupan bersama dan baru berganti pola dari cara hidup nomaden ke menetap ketika mereka berada di Kanaan, maka bangsa Israel tidak melihat kehadiran bangsa-bangsa sekitarnya sebagai yang asing bagi mereka. Mereka mengakui kekuatan bangsa-bangsa sekitarnya dan juga mencontohi cara hidup mereka, seperti keagamaan, pertanian, peternakan, dan sebagainya.

Di bidang keagamaan, salah satu contoh konkret adalah mengenai sistem korban di Israel. Para ahli berpendapat bahwa ritus-ritus korban di Israel sebagian besar diambil-alih dari kaum Kanaani, sesudah Israel menduduki tanah Kanaan.<sup>2</sup>

Marthinus Theodorus Mawene memperlihatkan hal lain sebagai dampak dari interkultural bagi bangsa Israel mengenai hikmat. Mawene berpendapat bahwa unsur-unsur hikmat dari negeri tetangga ikut memengaruhi tradisi hikmat di Israel.<sup>3</sup> Hal tersebut tampak dalam perumusan ketentuan-ketentuan moral masyarakat Israel kuno yang dipengaruhi oleh tradisi hikmat bangsa-bangsa Kanaan dan Mesopotamia.<sup>4</sup> K. van der Toorn sebagaimana dikutip Mawene mengelompokkan pandangan-pandangan masyarakat kuno di Asia Barat Daya kuno ke dalam lima perintah moral yang berbentuk apodiktik, seperti yang juga dirumuskan dalam Dasatitah (Kel. 20:12-16), yakni: (i) Kewajiban menghormati orang tua; (ii) Larangan menumpahkan darah sesama manusia; (iii) Larangan berzinah; (iv) Larangan mencuri; dan (v) Larangan memberi kesaksian palsu.<sup>5</sup>

Dampak dari interkultural Bangsa Israel dengan bangsa-bangsa asing tampak juga pada masa pemerintahan Salomo

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<sup>2</sup> H.H Rowley, *Ibadat Israel Kuno*, Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1983, hal 87.

<sup>3</sup> Marthinus Theodorus Mawene, *Relasi Torah dan Hikmat dalam Perjanjian Lama: suatu uraian secara historis* dalam Kees de Jong dan Yusak Tridarmanto, (Ed), *Teologi dalam silang Budaya: Menguak makna Teologi dalam Interkultural serta perannya bagi upaya berolah Teologi di tengah-tengah pluralisme masyarakat Indonesia*, Yogyakarta: Yayasan Taman Pustaka Kristen Indonesia dan Fakultas Teologi Universitas Kristen Indonesia, 2015, hal 81

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, hal 87

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*.

dimana kebutuhan akan penataan kehidupan politik dan administrasi Kerajaan yang dipandang oleh Salomo begitu penting maka Salomo membuat langkah-langkah penting di bidang tersebut dengan mendatangkan ahli-ahli hikmat dari Mesir untuk kebutuhan kerajaan Israel yang dipimpin pada masanya.<sup>6</sup>

Gambaran umum sebagaimana diperlihatkan di atas, membuktikan kepada kita bahwa relasi bangsa Israel dengan bangsa-bangsa sekitarnya telah banyak memberi pengaruh bagi kehidupan mereka. Tetapi juga relasi tersebut memberi jawaban bagi kita bahwa bangsa Israel sejak para bapak leluhur telah mempunyai relasi yang sangat baik dengan bangsa-bangsa lain. Namun itu tidak berarti bahwa relasi tersebut menyuramkan status mereka sebagai bangsa yang tetap mempertahankan identitas mereka sebagai bangsa pilihan Allah. Identitas mereka sebagai bangsa pilihan Allah menjadi suatu prinsip yang dijaga meskipun mereka hidup berdampingan dengan bangsa-bangsa lain.

## **II.2 INTERKULTURAL DALAM PERJANJIAN BARU: Melihat Orang Samaria dalam Pandangan Yesus**

Model misi dan pelayanan Yesus di bumi adalah model yang merangkul keberagaman. Pada awal pelayanan-Nya, Yesus membaca gulungan kitab Yesaya untuk melayani orang miskin, membebaskan tawanan dan menolong yang tertindas. Yesus mengklaim bahwa “Kitab Suci digenapi” di dalam diri-Nya (Luk. 4: 14-21). Tentu saja, orang yang miskin, tertawan dan tertindas bukan hanya dalam komunitas bangsa Yahudi saja, tetapi juga melampaui batas wilayah, suku, dan bangsa asing di sekitar Palestina.

Meskipun 12 murid Tuhan Yesus berasal etnis yang sama, tetapi pelayanan Yesus adalah pelayanan yang merangkul keberagaman. Ia melakukan perjalanan jauh melampaui cakupan Israel. Yesus berjumpa dengan iman yang besar dari seorang perwira Romawi (Mat. 8:10), Perjumpaan dengan Perempuan Siro-Fenisia (Mrk. 7:24) dan beberapa orang Samaria (Yoh. 4, Luk. 10:25, 17:16).

Ini adalah bukti bahwa Yesus melayani semua orang, apa pun latar belakangnya. Pelayanan-Nya menunjukkan keterlibatan,

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, hal 90

kasih sayang, cinta, penerimaan, dan pengampunan bagi orang-orang dari semua latar belakang dan lapisan masyarakat.<sup>7</sup> Oleh karena itu, dalam menelaah bagaimana pandangan Yesus mengenai interkultural dan keberagaman maka penulis akan membahas mengenai Percakapan Yesus dengan perempuan Samaria (Yoh. 4).

### 1. *Awal konflik orang Yahudi dan Samaria*

Orang Samaria adalah setengah Yahudi, setengah bukan Yahudi. Ras ini muncul setelah Orang-orang Asyur ditawan oleh kerajaan Israel di utara pada 721 SM. Orang-orang Israel kemudian kawin campur dengan orang Asyur yang menghasilkan orang Samaria.<sup>8</sup>

Pada zaman Tuhan Yesus, Orang Yahudi di Palestina hidup terpisah dari orang Samaria. Samaria berada di antara Galilea utara dan Yudea dan selatan Yerusalem. Sebenarnya jalur terpendek bagi orang Yahudi untuk pergi ke utara dari Yerusalem atau selatan dari Galilea adalah dengan melintasi daerah Samaria. Namun, selama ratusan tahun orang Yahudi dan orang Samaria hidup dalam permusuhan. Mereka tidak setuju tempat umat Tuhan harus beribadah. Bagi orang Yahudi tempat untuk menyembah Tuhan berada di Bait Suci di Yerusalem sedangkan Orang Samaria telah membuat tempat untuk beribadah. Tempat beribadah mereka berada di gunung Gerizim. Orang Yahudi dan orang Samaria saling membenci. Kebanyakan orang Yahudi tidak mau berpergian melewati Samaria. Orang Yahudi bahkan rela menempuh rute yang lebih jauh guna menghindari kontak langsung dengan orang Samaria.<sup>9</sup>

Menarik bahwa orang Yahudi memandang orang Samaria sebagai sempalan dan bukan golongan kafir<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Scott RIDOUT, "New Testament: Bible verses about diversity" <https://converge.org/article/new-testament-bible-verses-about-diversity> (27-04-2021)

<sup>8</sup> Don Stewart: Who were the Samaritans? : [https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don\\_stewart/don\\_stewart\\_1319.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_1319.cfm) (27-04-2021)

<sup>9</sup> Jews and Samaritans, <https://ccea.org.uk/downloads/docs/ccea-asset/Resource/Resource%208%20%E2%80%93%20Jews%20and%20Samaritans.pdf#:~:text=Jews%20and%20Samaritans%20hated%20each,do%20to%20receive%20eternal%20life%3F%E2%80%9D> (27-04-2021)

<sup>10</sup> Ensiklopedia Alkitab Masa Kini: Samaria, Orang. Hal. 352



namun perselisihan mereka terkait Tempat untuk menyembah Allah membuat mereka hidup dalam perselisihan dan kebencian dan bahkan orang Yahudi menganggap orang Samaria adalah warga kelas dua (karena orang Samaria yang dahulunya juga orang Yahudi telah berkhianat dan memilih kawin campur dengan orang Asyur sehingga mereka tidak mempertahankan kemurnian orang Yahudi).

Menurut Brill, orang Samaria adalah keturunan orang Yahudi dan orang Asyur yang ditempatkan di Samaria sesudah orang-orang Israel ditawan di negeri Asyur. Mereka tetap menyembah dewa-dewa mereka, tetapi juga menyembah Tuhan dengan berhala mereka. Sesudah orang Yahudi bebas dari tawanan di negeri Babel, mereka ingin menolong membangun kembali Bait Allah di Yerusalem, tetapi Nehemia menolak pertolongan mereka. Karena itu mereka melawan orang Yahudi. Lalu Orang Samaria membangun kabah sendiri di gunung Gerizim. Imam mereka yang pertama adalah Manasye yang menikah dengan perempuan Persia. Agama mereka adalah setengah kafir dan setengah Yahudi. Karena itu bangsa Yahudi membenci mereka lebih dari pada membenci bangsa lain yang benar-benar kafir.<sup>11</sup>

Pandangan ini kemudian menahbiskan paham partikularistik: bahwa keselamatan hanya milik bangsa Yahudi, keselamatan yang eksklusif karena mereka adalah bangsa pilihan atas perjanjian Allah kepada nenek moyang mereka: Abraham, Ishak, dan Yakub. Namun paham partikularistik ini secara frontal dipatahkan oleh Tuhan Yesus (=orang Yahudi) ketika siang hari terik Ia berjumpa dengan perempuan Samaria di sumur Yakub.

2. *Perjumpaan Tuhan Yesus dengan Perempuan Samaria*  
Dalam Yohanes pasal 4, arah perjalanan Tuhan Yesus berubah drastis. Tuhan Yesus melakukan perjalanan dari pusat bangsa Yahudi hingga ke wilayah pinggiran Samaria. Itu artinya, Tuhan Yesus melewati batasan budaya, etnis, jenis kelamin, dan konvensi sosial.

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<sup>11</sup> J. Wesley BRILL, *Tafsiran Injil Yohanes* (Bandung: Yayasan Kalam Hidup), 49–50

Saat hari siang dan panas terik, Yesus haus dan kebetulan berjumpa dengan perempuan Samaria di sumur Yakub yang sedang menimba air. Percakapan dimulai ketika Yesus meminta minum kepada perempuan Samaria<sup>12</sup> saat menimba air.<sup>13</sup>

Rupanya respons dari perempuan Samaria itu skeptis karena ia tahu bagaimana hubungan antara bangsanya dan orang Yahudi yang tidak kondusif. Perempuan Samaria menjawab Tuhan Yesus demikian: “Masakan Engkau, seorang Yahudi, minta minum kepadaku, seorang Samaria?” Ada rasa heran dalam jawaban perempuan Samaria itu. Seolah-olah ia berkata, “kamu orang Yahudi membenci kami orang Samaria; tetapi apabila kamu haus, kamu meminta pertolongan dari kami.”<sup>14</sup> Bagaimana respons balik dari Tuhan Yesus, apakah Tuhan Yesus merasa terhina? Sekali-kali tidak. Karena perjumpaan di sumur Yakub tentu saja bukan perjumpaan tanpa makna melainkan perjumpaan yang mengubah dan memulihkan. Tuhan Yesus dalam pasal pembacaan ini memberikan nilai baru bagi kehidupan perempuan Samaria dan menunjukan kepadanya jalan keselamatan.

Respons Tuhan Yesus terlihat pada ayat 13. Yesus menunjukkan bahwa kehausan manusia tidak dapat dipuaskan oleh air yang ada dalam dunia ini. “Kehausan” jiwa manusia merupakan kehausan rohani. Dan itulah sebabnya perkara-perkara bendawi tidak mampu memuaskannya.<sup>15</sup>

Tuhan Yesus mencoba membangunkan rasa ingin tahu dalam hati perempuan itu. “jikalau engkau tahu...” (ayat 10). Yesus mengetahui keperluan rohani perempuan itu, lalu Ia menawarkan air hidup kepada-Nya. Lalu perempuan itu mulai berkata dengan hormat: “Tuhan, Engkau tidak

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<sup>12</sup> Seorang wanita mengambil air di tengah hari – mungkin karena ia seorang tipe wanita tertentu maka mengambil air di waktu yang tidak biasa untuk wanita desa: bersama-sama di pagi hari – dan dipertemukan dengan Yesus yang berhenti di sumur itu, karena para murid pergi ke desa membeli bekal santapan. St. Darmawijaya, (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1988), 51.

<sup>13</sup> Air, di negara-negara yang memiliki iklim panas tinggi sangat dibutuhkan oleh manusia. Rasa haus merupakan sinyal dari tubuh manusia yang mulai kehilangan cairan tubuh dan rasa haus yang ekstrim dapat menyebabkan manusia meregang nyawa. R.H. Lightfoot, *St. John's Gospel* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 121

<sup>14</sup> J. Wesley BRILL, *Tafsiran Injil Yohanes* (Bandung: Yayasan Kalam Hidup), 50

<sup>15</sup> A.W. PINK, *Tafsiran Injil Yohanes* (Surabaya: Yakin, 1945), 69

punya timba dan sumur itu amat dalam (ayat 11) ... adakah Engkau lebih besar dari bapa kami Yakub?" (ayat 12). Perempuan itu tidak mengerti bahwa Yesus berbicara tentang air hidup, yakni perkara rohani. Ia menyangka bahwa Yesus akan memberikan air minum yang baru saja dimintanya. Yesus menjawab bahwa Ia memberikan air yang memancar seperti mata air, yang mendatangkan hidup yang kekal.

Yesus menghendaki perempuan itu mengerti bahwa apa yang diberikan oleh-Nya adalah perkara rohani yang memuaskan hati dan jiwa orang. Nyata dari jawaban perempuan itu (ayat 15) bahwa ia belum mengerti perkataan Yesus. Yesus harus menerangkan arti "air hidup" yang diucapkan-Nya. Seolah-olah Yesus berkata, "Aku mempunyai air hidup yang engkau minta, tetapi ada sesuatu di dalam hidupmu yang harus diselesaikan lebih dahulu; pulanglah dan panggilah suamimu." Perkataan Yesus menusuk hati perempuan itu. "Aku tidak mempunyai suami," sahutnya (ayat 17). Ia tidak mau kehidupannya diselidiki oleh seorang Yahudi. Tuhan Yesus tetap sabar dan berkata: "tepat katamu, ... sebab engkau sudah mempunyai lima suami," (ayat 17-18). Barulah perempuan itu sadar bahwa ia tidak dapat menyembunyikan apa-apa di hadapan Yesus, yang sudah membuka kedok dari mukanya.

Perempuan Samaria tidak mau dosanya diselidiki lebih jauh, lalu ia mengalihkan pembicaraan kepada soal agama (ayat 20). Mengenai tempat penyembahan, apakah di gunung Gerizim atukah Yerusalem? Yesus hendak mengajarkan kepada perempuan itu penyembahan yang benar (ayat 21-24). Yesus menekankan bahwa soal penyembahan itu bukanlah soal tempat, sia-sialah perdebatan antara orang Yahudi dan orang Samaria mengenai tempat penyembahan. Ketika Yesus berkata bahwa menyembah itu harus dalam roh dan kebenaran, Ia membicarakannya terlepas dari persoalan waktu dan tempat (ayat 24).

Perempuan Samaria kemudian merespons balik dan mengatakan pada ayat 25: "aku tahu, bahwa Mesias akan datang..." Perkataannya menyatakan ketidaktahuan

dan pengharapan. Meskipun ia orang berdosa, ia masih menantikan Mesias, Terang dunia itu. Nyatalah bahwa hatinya haus akan air hidup itu. Yesus berkata “Akulah Dia,” Mesias itu. Perempuan itu percaya untuk pertama kalinya. Lalu Yesus mulai menyatakan diri-Nya kepada perempuan itu lebih daripada Ia menyatakan diri-Nya kepada Nikodemus. Yesus menghendaki perempuan Samaria itu sungguh-sungguh percaya kepada-Nya.

### **II.3 Respons Perempuan Samaria Setelah Berjumpa dengan Tuhan Yesus**

Setelah bercakap-cakap dengan Yesus, perempuan Samaria lalu menjadi seorang yang berkobar-kobar dalam Tuhan. Responsnya terlihat saat dia pergi ke kota dan berkata kepada orang-orang di situ, “mungkinkah Dia Kristus itu?” Kesaksian perempuan Samaria dan perkataan Tuhan Yesus menyebabkan banyak orang Samaria percaya bahwa Dialah Juruselamat dunia (ayat 41–42).

Rangkulan Yesus terhadap bangsa-bangsa lain (baca: Orang Samaria) bertolak belakang dengan perilaku orang Yahudi yang memusuhi orang Samaria. Orang Yahudi mengimani bahwa keselamatan itu bersifat partikularistis. Tetapi Yesus telah melenyapkan prasangka itu dengan mendatangi seorang perempuan Samaria. Berbanding terbalik dengan paham partikularistis, rupanya keselamatan secara universallah yang diusung oleh Yesus datang untuk semua bangsa, suku dan bahasa, sederhananya, Yesus datang untuk menyelamatkan dunia.<sup>16</sup>

Dengan demikian ada dua makna penting yang terkandung dalam perjumpaan Tuhan Yesus dengan Perempuan Samaria:

#### *1. Tuhan Yesus datang untuk seluruh bangsa, ras, dan bahasa*

Orang Yahudi sangat membenci orang Samaria, bahkan disampaikan bahwa kebencian orang Yahudi terhadap bangsa-bangsa lain tidaklah sekuat kebencian mereka terhadap orang Samaria. Tetapi Yesus mematahkan prasangka dari orang-orang Yahudi dan mendatangi seorang Perempuan Samaria di tengah hari panas terik. Yesus menunjukkan bahwa Injil tidak hanya ditujukan kepada

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<sup>16</sup> J. Wesley BRILL, Tafsiran Injil Yohanes (Bandung: Yayasan Kalam Hidup), 51–52

orang Yahudi saja tetapi juga atas seluruh bangsa, ras, dan bahasa. Selanjutnya, perjumpaan ini menunjukkan bahwa Kasih Tuhan tidak terikat pada tradisi manusia, budaya, atau praktik-praktik keagamaan, namun kasih-Nya menembus berbagai macam perbedaan.

## 2. *Perjumpaan itu mengubah hidup Perempuan Samaria dan Orang Samaria*

Perjumpaan Tuhan Yesus mengubah hidup perempuan Samaria. Ia yang awalnya merasa diri tidak berharga: Ia selalu mengambil air pada siang hari di sumur Yakub karena tidak ingin berjumpa dengan perempuan-perempuan yang lazimnya mengambil air pada pagi hari atau sore hari, tiba-tiba menjadi percaya diri, bersemangat, dan penuh sukacita serta riang gembira mengabarkan kabar perjumpaan-Nya dengan Tuhan Yesus. Bagaimana dengan respons orang banyak yang ia temui di kota? Alkitab mencatat pada Yohanes 4:42 “Kami percaya, tetapi bukan lagi karena apa yang kau katakan, sebab kami sendiri telah mendengar Dia dan kami tahu, Dialah benar-benar Juruselamat dunia.”

Pada akhirnya, percakapan Tuhan Yesus dengan perempuan Samaria adalah contoh dari misi pekabaran Injil yang ditujukan kepada orang luar. Pola pelayanan ini merupakan model pelayanan yang berani keluar dari zona nyaman dan pergi ke tempat-tempat yang tidak bersahabat. Hal ini juga secara implisit menantang gereja untuk keluar dari kenyamanannya untuk untuk mengabarkan Injil: melanggar batas, dengan orang luar dan orang tidak percaya. Carson (1991: 232) menyampaikan bahwa misi Samaria adalah misi antarbudaya yang dilakukan oleh Tuhan Yesus sebagai misionaris pertama. Paradigma ini perlu diikuti oleh Gereja. Hal ini tertuang dalam Kisah Para Rasul 1:8.

*“mulai dari Yerusalem, mencakup Yudea hingga Samaria dan sampai ke ujung bumi.”<sup>17</sup>*

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<sup>17</sup> Ricardo SMUTS (Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (John 4:1–42): A Paradigmatic Encounter for Discipleship [μαθητήσ] and Witness [μαρτυρία], (<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/196259595.pdf>) (27-04-2021)

### III. PENUTUP

Dalam Tata Gereja dan Peraturan-Peraturan GKI Di Tanah Papua, Bab I Pasal 1 dikatakan bahwa Gereja Kristen Injili di Tanah Papua ialah persekutuan jemaat-jemaat Kristen Injili di Tanah Papua.<sup>18</sup> Rupanya para pendahulu Gereja Kristen Injili Di Tanah Papua (selanjutnya GKI DI-TP) sudah mengantisipasi masa depan mengenai keberagaman gereja, artinya gereja tidak terdiri dari satu etnis/suku saja tapi terdiri dari kepelbagaian etnis. Bahkan tidak berlebihan untuk menuliskan bahwa pada Bab I Pasal 3.1 dari Tata Gereja dikatakan dengan jelas bahwa: Wilayah pelayanan Gereja Kristen Injili di Tanah Papua adalah daerah Papua. Pandangan ini menegaskan bahwa GKI DI-TP tidak akan didirikan di luar wilayah Papua, maksudnya: jika ada warga GKI DI-TP yang pindah domisili ke luar Papua maka mereka dengan sendirinya menjadi anggota dari gereja setempat yang seazas dengan GKI DI-TP.

Penulis (Pdt. M.M. Wospakrik) saat berada di luar Papua, pernah diajak berdiskusi dengan sekelompok anak muda untuk membangun GKI DI-TP di daerah tersebut (yang memang terdapat banyak mahasiswa asal Papua di sana), tetapi penulis dengan tegas menolak keinginan tersebut karena dasar pengakuan dalam Tata Gereja GKI DI-TP.

Apakah interkultural menjadi ancaman bagi gereja yang membumi? Dengan menerima keberagaman dan pada akhirnya menolak identitas gereja setempat? Realitanya, GKI DI-TP tidak mengabaikan semangat gereja yang membumi (kontesktual/inkultural) atau menafikan keberagaman.

Kenyataannya, beberapa jemaat dalam lingkup GKI DI-TP saat merayakan hari-hari besar gerejani menampilkan semangat gereja yang kontekstual dengan menunjukkan unsur budaya Papua dalam liturgi ibadah, seperti yang dilakukan oleh klasis Sentani dalam merayakan HUT GKI DI-TP yang ke-64 (tahun 2020). Liturgi ibadah dan khotbah disampaikan dalam bahasa Sentani di seluruh jemaat-jemaat GKI DI-TP di klasis Sentani.

Tetapi juga dalam semangat keberagaman pada hari raya gerejani, ditampilkan pula ibadah dalam unsur-unsur budaya dari warga GKI DI-TP yang berasal dari luar Papua, misalnya yang dilakukan oleh jemaat GKI Martin Luther di Klasis Sentani. Majelis Jemaat dan PHRG (Panitia Hari Raya Gerejani) mendesain ibadah

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<sup>18</sup> Tata Gereja dan Peraturan-Peraturan Gereja Kristen Injili di Tanah Papua (Jayapura: Badan Pekerja Am Sinode, 2007), 3.

hari raya gerejani di sepanjang tahun 2019 dengan semangat gereja yang multietnis, antara lain: ibadah HUT PI (Pekabaran Injil) dirayakan dalam semangat etnis Papua, ibadah Pentakosta dalam semangat etnis Maluku, ibadah HUT GKI DI-TP dalam semangat etnis Batak, ibadah Natal Jemaat dalam semangat etnis Toraja. Hal yang sama juga dilakukan oleh jemaat GKI I.S. Kijne, Klasis Port Numbay dalam perayaan Pentakosta ke-2, dan beberapa jemaat lainnya.

Melaksanakan ibadah yang multietnis memang bukanlah hal mudah, karena ada juga beberapa anggota jemaat yang pada waktu itu menolak untuk menghadiri ibadah-ibadah gerejani tersebut karena menurut mereka GKI DI-TP bukanlah persekutuan suku/etnis, atau ada juga idea dari beberapa anggota gereja yang berpendapat bahwa seharusnya ibadah itu menampilkan semangat gereja dalam konteks (Papua) dan bukan sebaliknya.

Bertolak dari tanggapan pro dan kontra di atas, maka memang dibutuhkan hermenutik yang benar tentang keberadaan gereja sebagai persekutuan orang-orang percaya yang saling memahami dan sekaligus melihat keberagaman itu sebagai suatu kekuatan dan identitas dari gereja.

Ini suatu tantangan yang serius karena bagaimana keberagaman etnis dalam konteks GKI Di-TP tidak harus menghilangkan identitas warga jemaat asli Papua yang ada di dalam gereja dan memaknai GKI Di-TP sebagai gereja yang harus menjaga keberadaan orang Papua dalam GKI Di-TP, sebagaimana dalam pengalaman penulis (Pdt K. Notanubun) ketika ditanya oleh salah seorang pendeta yang juga adalah seorang dosen di salah satu perguruan tinggi Teologi di luar Papua: *“Kenapa GKI Di-TP tidak memakai nama gereja Kristen Papua sehingga ciri Papua lebih tampak dalam gereja?”* Ini berarti bahwa keberagaman gereja di suatu tempat dipahami sebagai gereja milik masyarakat setempat. Ini tidak salah, tetapi kita harus sadari bahwa keberadaan gereja di tempat tersebut tidak berarti gereja bersifat eksklusif.

Identitas penting, sebagaimana Israel memandang dirinya sebagai umat pilihan Allah tetapi identitas itu tidak harus menutup kemungkinan untuk melihat keterbukaan sebagai suatu gereja yang adalah persekutuan orang percaya dari berbagai etnis dan universal sebagaimana sikap Yesus yang terbuka dan merangkul perempuan Samaria sebagai yang lain.

Di sinilah kita disadarkan untuk mengalami perubahan berpikir dalam upaya *to live together* dalam kedamaian dan keharmonisan sebagai suatu gereja.

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12. Tata Gereja dan Peraturan-Peraturan Gereja Kristen Injili di Tanah Papua (Jayapura: Badan Pekerja Am Sinode, 2007)

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# **GKE: REFLECTION OF AN ETHNIC-TERRITORIAL CHURCH BECOMING NATIONALIST-ECUMENICAL**

*Rev. Kinurung Maleh, D.Th*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The year 1950 represented an era of reformation for Gereja Kalimantan Evangelis (GKE) towards becoming a nationalist-ecumenical church. The change in name from Gereja Dayak Evangelis (GDE), which was exclusive to the Dayak people, to Gereja Kalimantan Evangelis was a courageous and wise step towards accepting and serving all non-Dayak peoples present in Kalimantan. In affirmation of this commitment, the GKE Code since 1950 – 2010 has stated that GKE should only be present on the island of Kalimantan, and should not establish churches outside of Kalimantan. This is an idealism that is highly ecumenical. In realization of this commitment, GKE has also invited all of its members who have relocated outside Kalimantan to become members of available churches. How was this nationalist-ecumenical paradigm understood and practiced by GKE in the 20<sup>th</sup> century?

The development of GKE experienced a dynamic change at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when the idea of establishing a new congregation outside Kalimantan arose. The idea was accepted and affirmed in the XXII General Synod of 2010 that “GKE

is a fellowship of congregations on the island of Kalimantan, and elsewhere in Indonesia” (MS GKE 2015, 5). In March 2017, the GKE DKI Jakarta congregation was established for the first time outside of Kalimantan, signifying a new era for GKE. Thus, a critical question emerges: why did GKE change its ecumenical commitment by establishing a church outside of Kalimantan? What is the state of GKE’s nationalist-ecumenical paradigm in this 21<sup>st</sup> century?

## **THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF GKE**

Pastor Fridolin Ukur’s book, *Tuaiannya Sungguh Banyak* (1960), is a primary reference for understanding the history and existence of GKE. In the first chapter, Ukur states that the birth of GKE was a result of Zending Barmen’s evangelism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century -- *Rheinische Missiongesellschaft*.

In 1830, news of the island of Kalimantan proliferated across German lands, with the story of hundreds of thousands Dayak tribespeople who were left far behind in civilization and who had never heard of the Gospel. This news enflamed the longing of Christians in Germany to go – to meet their brothers and sisters of the Dayak nation and bring with them that great Light, the good news of Jesus Christ, for those that were still living in darkness. Four years later, in a general assembly of the Rheinische Mission, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June 1834, the island of Kalimantan was chosen to be one of the new areas for evangelism. This longing and awareness of love was then manifested on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 1834, when two evangelists were ordained in Barmen and sent as its first evangelists... those two evangelists were Barnstein and Heyer” (Ukur 2000, 8).

On June 26<sup>th</sup> 1835, J.H. Barnstein stepped foot in Banjarmasin, Bumi Kalimantan, while Hayer, due to health conditions, had to return to Germany without ever going to Kalimantan. The date of Barnstein’s arrival has been designated by GKE as the Day of the Message of the Gospel. For nearly thirty years, Barnstein continued to evangelize in Kalimantan, and was buried in Banjarmasin on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1863. Ukur lovingly wrote:

Barnstein will continue to represent a beautiful name in the history of GKE. For as long as he lived, he truly was a faithful servant of Christ, working among all kinds of ethnic and national groups in Banjarmasin. Whether followers of Islam or Kaharingan, or brothers and sisters of Chinese or Caucasian descent, they all felt the illuminating and self-sacrificial love that was demonstrated throughout his entire life (Ukur 2000, 9-10).

In Kalimantan, the first fruit of evangelism in the form of repentance was declared with the first baptism on April 1839 in Bethabara – Palingkau 10<sup>th</sup> by Hupperts. This event is noted by GKE as a precursor to GDE, which later became GKE (MS GKE 2015, 3). The Dayak people in the Palingkau region first received ministry in other forms: medical services/treatment and education (Ukur 2000, 10). Another notable event of the Zending Barmen period was the Banjar War (1859-1866), which caused setbacks for evangelism and left a dark mark with the murder of five missionaries and their families (Ariawan 2020, 102). In 1866, the Dutch Colonial Government reinstated its permission for missionaries to conduct evangelism throughout Dayak settlements. This continued until 1914, when World War I created difficulties for Zending in continuing its ministry.

In 1920, the ministry being carried out by Zending Barmen experienced financial and communicational difficulties due to World War I. In its 85 years of ministry, Zending Barmen baptized around 5000 people, ordained 15 Dayak evangelists and 39 elders, and built 11 main bases. Ministry in Kalimantan was handed over to Zending Basel with a transition period of five years (1920-1925). During this transition period, four of Zending Basel's first evangelists were sent to Kalimantan: H. Henking, G. Weiler, F. Kuhnle, and J. Huber. Then, on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1925, the last group of Barmen's evangelists left Kalimantan, consisting of K. Epple, C. Hendrich, M. Anskhol, and H. Lampmann. Ukur beautifully illustrates this process of transition: "They who planted have departed, and so arrives those who were tasked to water. Those who plant and those who water become the same, but the only one who grows is Allah himself" (Ukur 2000, 21-24). Until 1960 there were 54 Barmen missionaries and 66 Basel missionaries.

Another ten years of ministry followed (1925–1935), with a growing congregation, a widening reach, evangelistic methods that were becoming more dynamic, and the ordination of five Dayak First pastors. In the Synod I 1935 of Barimba, eight Zending Basel missionaries along with 30 Christian Dayak representatives formally founded GDE. GDE was a fellowship of the numerous congregations that had been shaped by Zending Barmen and Zending Basel in Kalimantan. An important point to underline in the formation of GDE is that both Zending Barmen as well as Zending Basel served wholeheartedly and bore fruit. With a focus on proclamation of the Gospel and repentance, thus developed a holistic mission surrounding education, health, agriculture, publication, cooperation, contextualization, and liberation of slaves. Fifteen years later, GDE reformed itself with the name GKE. In the opening of the GKE Code, the name change is summarized exclusively:

“next, based on the awareness of the church’s calling as messengers into the world, imbued with ecumenical spirit and understanding of nationalism, thus at the General Synode V GDE dated 5–9 November 1950 in Banjarmasin, the name *Gereja Dayak Evangelis* was changed to *Gereja Kalimantan Evangelis*, or abbreviated to GKE” (MS GKE 2015, 3).

In 1988, for the first time, GKE formulated a 25 Year Long-term GBTP with the goal of realizing its independence in theology, capability, and funds; with increasing resource quality as the most strategic step (Tawar Soewardji 2005, 54). Since 2015, in the General Synod, the strategic long-term vision of GKE has been directed to the *realization of GKE members as missionaries* with the main task of continuing the improvement in quality and quantity of GKE’s independence in theology, capability, and funds (MS GKE 2015, 3).

Based on this aforementioned vision and goal, to this day, GKE continues to faithfully serve Dayak citizens and all the ethnic groups in Kalimantan and Indonesia. GKE also continues to maintain its name and recognizes its Founding Day as the date of the first baptism that is April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1839 in Kampung Betabara. This year, GKE turns 182 years old with a membership numbering in 324,801 people across 1,265 congregations, served by 953 workers (BPH MS GKE 2020, 1). With this development, GKE continues to develop as it grows older.

## **GDE: EXCLUSIVE TO THE DAYAK?**

Ukur stated that the decision to form GDE purely represented the desire of the Dayak people in being wholly responsible in spreading the Gospel for the Dayak nation, and society in Kalimantan. This desire received a very positive response from Zending Basel, which prepared for the existence of GDE by founding the School for Pastors (1932), creating opportunities for leadership at the synod level, and providing funding and resources (Ukur 2000, 35–40). On the same note, Marko Mahin wrote:

“It is called the Dayak Church because its primary goal is based in serving and advancing the Dayak nation. Then, as a “sign” that GDE is not a Dutch church or a colonialist church. The word “Dayak” signifies that GDE is a church belonging to the native people of Kalimantan” (Rama Tulus & Marko Mahin 2005, xiii).

The challenges faced by Zending Barmen due to World War I and the handover to Zending Barmen moved the idealism of Christian Dayaks to stand on their own under one church. Ukur stated that the initiative to form GDE had been started since the year 1926, rooted firmly on an organizational basis at the meeting of pastors and evangelists in 1930, and established at the Synod I of 1935 in Barimba (Ukur 2000, 35–39).

The question is, was the GDE ministry exclusive by and for the Dayak people? History notes that the name GDE was indeed heavy with ministry by and for the Dayak people in Kalimantan. Nevertheless, the openness towards ministry for and by people of other national tribes remained. The formation of GDE in 1935 was also a national-ecumenical event to a limited extent. This historical event is said to be closed because the change in name from GDE to GKE was one of the few notable moments for the nationalist-ecumenical attitude in GKE. When GDE was formed, there were around 4 different national groups that were united: Dayak, Tionghoa, European, and possibly Banjar. GDE also unified at least 7 Dayak subgroups: Samihim, Ngaju (Katingan, Mentaya, Kapuas) Punan, Ot Danum, Tomun, Maanyan, and Dusun. These Dayak groups had differing languages, traditions, and territories (river flows). From a denominational perspective, GDE also unified

congregations from a Lutheran background (Barmen), Calvinists (Basel), and Pietis-Anglican (Halle-Danish) (Stephen Neil 1990, 236).

If not fully categorized as a nationalist-ecumenical church, the movement and color of nationalism and ecumenism was born and grew with the formation of GDE. The word Dayak itself cannot be interpreted as too narrowly by and for the Dayak. GDE's School for Pastors ordained a Tionghoa person, Thio Kiong Djin, who became a pastor with a special task amongst the Tionghoa people. In addition, a Dayak Meratus-Labuhan person, Yonias, Songan, was ordained to become a pastor with the special task of evangelizing to an ardent and fanatic Islam society in Hulu Sungai – Kalimantan Selatan (Ukur 2000, 42-43).

## **GDE TO GKE: REFORMATION?**

The change in name from GDE to GKE was established in the GKE Synod V on 5-9 November 1950 in Banjarmasin. This name change was accepted with a full realization of independence, nationalism, and oneness. Based on an examination of several historical sources of GKE and the scholarly works of STT GKE students, several factors and effects of the name change are described:

1. **Independence of the Church.** The long-term effects of World War II and the Japanese Occupation in Kalimantan opened the eyes of GDE to the fact that pastors and members of GDE alone were capable of sustaining the existence of the church. Neither the arrest and exile of the missionaries by the Dutch and Japanese forces, nor the interruption of aid and communications from Zending Basel, could stop GDE despite facing heavy challenges. Indirect pressure from Japan on GDE also did not stop its ministry or evangelism. GDE adopted a policy of sharing the elements of church life with local congregations in rural areas without waiting for help or coordination from Zending, synod, or resort (Ukur 2000, 58). During this time of many pressures, for the first time, GDE was chaired by a Christian Dayak, W.A. Samat, who states that GDE was not tied to Zending but instead the Call of the Lord Jesus according to the will of the Bible (Ukur 2000, 59, 235). Since then, the leadership of the church has been in the hands of pastors and Dayak members (National Pastors), while Zending pastors were assigned as advisors. The change in name from

GDE to GKE was a new era of independence that was described in Article 3 of the GKE Code, where GKE is a church that stands on its own and executes its own evangelism. Acknowledging this, Zending gave up its own ministry and was ready to cooperate with GKE (Ukur 2000, 73), even though the influence of Zending Basel remained strong in terms of funding and resources as well as theology until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

2. **Ethnic Pluralism in Kalimantan.** Tjilik Riwut listed the Dayak as having 7 main groups that are themselves divided into 18 sub-tribes, and again into 405 familial tribes (Tjilik Riwut 1994, 234). Each of these tribal branches practices different languages and traditions, even though there are some similarities. This plurality became richer with meetings with other groups in Kalimantan, namely Banjar, Melayu, and China, alongside the arrival of groups from other islands such as Jawa, Batak, and Bugis. GDE understood that its existence was determined by the context and scale of its ministry, alongside the realization that GDE was called to serve the Kalimantan people. This change gave birth to GKE's missionary theology: the name GKE indicated that the missionary function of the church was not for itself, but for the world and in this regard for the Kalimantan people. The task of GKE's missionaries was not limited to specific tribes or groups, but the entirety of nations that were in Kalimantan (Ukur 2000, 72).
3. **Indonesian Nationalism.** The independence of Indonesia from Japanese and Dutch occupation gave birth to high nationalism across the entirety of Indonesia, including Kalimantan. GDE viewed itself and Kalimantan as a part of Indonesia, and that it was called to serve the entire country with all of its ethnic and cultural diversity. This revival was stated by Ukur that the name GDE seemed to only prioritize and be for the Dayak people and closed the possibility for other tribes in Indonesia residing in Kalimantan (Ukur 2000, 22). Pdt. H. Dingang Patianom, Chair of the Synod Assembly, stated that the name change from GDE to GKE was fitting for Kalimantan because the name GDE was exclusive to Christian Dayaks and therefore created marginalization for the other Christians in Kalimantan (Ukur 2000, 72).
4. **Ecumenical Revival:** The ecumenical movement in Indonesia had been entering a phase of revival with the establishment of



the World Church Council (1948) and the Council of Churches in Indonesia (DGI - 1950). Franedi, quoting Ukur, stated that ecumenical thinking in GDE began in Synod III in 1941, discussed in Synod IV in 1946, and followed with enthusiasm by a younger generation which unified itself in the Ecumenical Christian Youth Council in 1948, until the name change to GKE. This name change erased the closed nature while opening GDE to the path of unity in Indonesia (Franedi 2000, 31 & Ukur 1979, 277). The name GKE pointed to a realization that GKE, as a living part of the church community, can move together towards a unity of churches across all of Indonesia by focusing on uniting the churches in Kalimantan (Ukur 2000, 72).

### **THE ECUMENICAL AND NATIONALIST FACE OF GKE**

The name change from GDE to GKE created a more open ministry, as well as a ministry that considered the aspects of plurality, unity, and nationality. Expanding on Franedi's thoughts, the meaning of the aforementioned change for GKE was: 1) Social Meaning which is to accept the plurality of Kalimantan's people and place the function of GKE as an integral part of their social life. The plurality of the community and members of GKE must be viewed as a positive social force in the development of the church; 2) Cultural Meaning, namely to accept that GKE is not a tribal church, but one where various ethnic groups are united. GKE is not only tied to and indigenous to the Dayak tradition, but accommodates and develops ministries across ethnic and cultural groups of the Indonesian nation; 3) Political Meaning, in that GKE became a regional church with political influence and participation that grows increasingly stronger in Indonesia. GKE's ministries throughout Kalimantan and to all ethnic groups, both indigenous and non-indigenous, made GKE accepted by all parts, and representative of the various ethnic groups in Kalimantan; 4) Theological Meaning, where GKE became a tool of God's salvation and becomes a blessing for all ethnic groups on earth. GKE was called and sent forth to cross ethnic and cultural boundaries to all creation (Bdk. Franedi 2000, 31-41), all groups and all religions (Mujiburrahman 2008, 378); 5) the Meaning of Gender Justice, that is, the willingness to accept and empower women as pastors of GKE with the same rights and respect as male pastors.

The reality until now is that GKE has successfully transformed into an ecumenical-nationalist church. GKE opened a wide door to receive all ethnic groups and all churches to become leaders, servers, and members of GKE. In this simple piece of writing, several of the ecumenical-nationalist faces of GKE are shown:

1. The highest levels of leadership at GKE, at the Synod level and at the Theological College as well as Institution and Head of Resort/Congregation, being held by non-Dayak people. GKE has been led by a Chair of the Synod Assembly and the General Secretary of the Synod Assembly from the Javanese ethnic group. During this same period, the Theological College of GKE was led by someone of Batak ethnicity, and the Chair of the Theological Educational Foundation was held by someone from the Toraja tribe. Until today, tens of GKE's Resorts and Congregations are led and served by pastors from various ethnic groups such as Java, Batak, Manado, Flores, Ambon, Papua, Tionghoa, Banjar, etc.
2. GKE pastors are cross-ethnic, and members of the congregation are cross-ethnic. In the past two decades, GKE has received candidates for ministry from outside of Kalimantan, those who were not graduates of GKE's Theological College, and from other churches. This acceptance demonstrates the values and practices of mature nationalism and unity. GKE has opened itself not only to various ethnic groups and churches in Kalimantan, but also those from outside Kalimantan. At the same time, congregation members and functionaries of GKE also consist of various ethnic groups. With humility, it is possible that nearly all of Indonesia's ethnic groups are represented in GKE.
3. GKE continued its uniqueness in not establishing GKE outside of Kalimantan. This commitment remained until the year 2010. GKE even invited its members outside of Kalimantan to join existing churches that were available. There is no thought of establishing GKE outside Kalimantan soil, even though there are thousands of GKE congregation members that *hijrah* (migrated) to very strategic positions outside Kalimantan. At the same time, GKE also does not force members of other churches that come to Kalimantan to join GKE. They can decide for themselves to establish their own church or join another.

4. GKE represents one of the pioneers and supporters behind the establishment of DGI. GKE participates and takes initiative in various ecumenical activities, both together with DGI/PGI and independently with other churches in Kalimantan. Fridolin Ukur, E. Saloh, Chr. A. Kiting, Teras Narang, and Darius Dubut are some of the representatives of GKE that have been active in DGI/PGI leadership. Even in the area of financial rights, GKE is the largest church that cooperates in the managing of PGI pension funds. GKE is also registered as a member of WCC, WARC, and CCA, and develops inclusive ecumenical relationships with 50 partner institutions (BPH MS GKE 2020, 112).
5. The vision, mission, and strategic programs of GKE consistently consider the portion of national ministry and unity. The Koinonia, Marturia, and Diakonia of GKE always allows room for all church members to actively participate in serving the country, society, churches, and all creation. Similarly, the theological formation of GKE based on the Bible gives color to high ecumenical relations. Maleh writes that “GKE was called by Jesus Christ into the world as a living messenger of Christ through fellowship, witness, and ministry. To realize this call and this mission, ecumenical efforts and cooperation are an essential part. The theological considerations above suggest a causal relationship. The commitment that GKE can only exist on the island of Kalimantan is because it is influenced by the framework of acknowledgement of ecumenical theology, and conversely, the acknowledgement and commission of GKE affects ecumenical relations (Kinurung Maleh 2008, 3).
6. GKE developed a liturgy of cultural interaction and hybrid worship. GKE has cultivated a liturgy that is very contextual and creative in answering the diversity of ethnic traditions of the groups in its congregation. The domination of mid-century European liturgies indeed remains strong in GKE, nevertheless, the liturgy of Dayak culture with a Kaharingan dimension has been commonly accepted, along with room for the display of languages, symbols, hymns, and dances from other ethnic groups. GKE has the face of a missionary church that is rich in cultural expressions from across the archipelago. On the same note, ecclesiastical interactions, especially with Pentecostal (Charismatic) and Evangelical groups, create the hybrid liturgy of GKE. It is common to find popular hymns,

sermons without pulpits, musical accompaniments complete with song and worship leaders, as well as sermon themes that prioritize “prosperity and success.” Hybrid liturgy is practiced at Sunday services, church celebrations and even more in ministry for children, teenagers, and youths. The emphasis of GKE’s Preaching of the Good News in the past decade was also caused by the boom of evangelism (Evangelism Explosion) that originated strongly from Pentecostal and Evangelical groups.

There are many other examples that can be described in evidence of the nationalist-ecumenical face of GKE. However, there remains the intriguing question of whether GKE is truly an ecumenical-nationalist church. What prompted GKE to establish a church outside of Kalimantan? Mahin’s criticism 15 years ago could be a whip:

“However, it is a shame that the holy intention of GKE leadership at the time towards the name change (GDE to GKE) made the church become “*banci*” [cross-dresser] in its identity. The desire to be a regional church that served all Christians on the island of Kalimantan was in fact incapable of being achieved, nor accepted. It turns out that the majority of Batak people prefer their HKBP and the Ambon and Manado people prefer their GPIB. At the end, the Dayak are left confused because they have indulgently eaten up the Western ecumenical spirit and vomited out their own identity by leaving behind the name *Gereja Dayak Evangelis*. This name change has now become “a symbol of betrayal in the ecumenical movement in Indonesia,” because GKE faithfully do not build churches outside of Kalimantan, but churches from outside Kalimantan compete to build their own churches in Kalimantan, as if Kalimantan does not have GKE. GKE willingly accepts its faith from various ethnic tribes and churches to become pastors of GKE, but there are no Dayak people that become pastors at HKBP, GKJ, or others” (Mahin 2005, XIII-XIV).

Maleh goes further by considering the establishment of a GKE outside of Kalimantan. In an article entitled “Is it enough to Only Have the Kalimantan Evangelical Church in Kalimantan?” that was published in the GKE STT Journal, Vol. II, 2008, Maleh views the

ecumenical reality of other churches was not positive in building church unity in Kalimantan. According to him, in the past three decades, there was a rapid growth of new churches. The emergence of new churches in Kalimantan, he felt, took the “sheep” of GKE, caused conflicts and pushed GKE to the side instead of showing recognition and cooperation with GKE. This reality throws into question the “ecumenical idealism” (Maleh 2008, 4). These notes from Mahin and Maleh could be a strike on the right cheek for GKE as well as a strike on the left cheek for the nature of ecumenism in Indonesia.

In a neutral dimension, the change to the GKE Code that ushered in the founding of a GKE outside of Kalimantan must be viewed through the lens of unity and nationalism. GKE realized that ecumenical theology cannot be limited by “place and history” but requires context and service challenges. Where there is injustice, oppression, or downturns, GKE should be present. This decision also opened an even bigger opportunity for GKE staff to be competitive among ministers and leadership at the national and international level. Alongside answering the longing of GKE members and Dayak people overseas, this step has enriched the insight, association, and service of GKE pastors, including developing the self through education, access to the latest information and fostering relations with national figures, notable and authoritative. GKE continues to grow wider and more active in its work towards unity and nationality (Bdk. Maleh 2008, 5). With this view, GKE’s goal to develop its presence outside Kalimantan represents an expression of nationalist-ecumenism.

## **REFLEKSI**

This section of the reflection gives rhythm and dynamics that an inclusive, nationalist and ecumenical church creates a more universal journey in attending to God’s mission and manifesting God’s love for all, in the diversity of ethnic groups and church denominations.

1. *The independence of the church has comprehensive impact.* Theological motives, commitment to the faith and various events met to unite the goal of an independent GKE. The name GKE represents the independence of the first church in Kalimantan. Independence was not borne of itself, it encouraged the values and practices of nationality, unity, and mission.

This was the brave and wise step GKE took so that it exists as a church that is not exclusive to one tribe, one region, or one denomination. Today, the word independence has become a strength for GKE in developing its ministry and partnerships that are based on the values of nationalism and ecumenism. Tawar Soewardji, the Char of MS GKE 2005–2010 stated that since 1988–2013 (GKE Long-Term Program I) independence became a key word in understanding GKE, the primary word in moving GKE, and the final word in achieving an advanced and of high quality (Soewardji 2005, 51–71). Since the years 2015–2040 (GKE Long-Term Program II), the word independence still adheres strongly in harmony with the word “missionary.” (MS GKE 2015, 3)

2. *Differences and diversity are the identity of the Church.* The uniqueness of GKE with the Dayak and with Kalimantan is part of its natural identity that continues to be preserved. On that note, historical notes reflect a positive and beautiful impression of how GKE unites the various ethnic groups and churches in Kalimantan. Bringing unity to this diversity is not only limited to accepting others as brothers and sisters in Christ, but also empowering all to become servants and leaders. Learning from this history, differences in religion, ethnicity and creation is an integral part of GKE’s life because the inclusive-ecumenical values must be developed for as long as GKE is called by God to go into the world. In today’s era, where differences and diversity cannot be contained even in the digital and ecclesia-hybrid dimensions, the church rightly places a cross-cultural and cross-liturgical mission as its identity. Nevertheless, critical and audacious attitudes in churches that do not care or misuse ecumenism and nationalism must be opposed and silenced.
3. *Ecumenism and nationalism that grow.* The reality of ecumenism is laden with an inclusive dimension. The content and inclusivity of GKE’s ecumenism can be read since the first missionary meeting with the Dayak in 1835 in Kalimantan – an encounter of different faiths. This encounter increasingly grew through GDE 1935 and GKE 1950, not only in Kalimantan but also outside of Kalimantan 2010. Ecumenical encounters grew in a nationalist way, rooted in “Languages and Traditions of the Dayak” and developed through the variety of “Languages and Traditions of the Archipelago.” In the 21<sup>st</sup> century era of digitalization, where ecumenism is becoming more dynamic

and challenging, GKE and all churches must view it as a field of ecumenical growth is yellowing, ready to be reaped for the Glory of God, the Creator of diversity.

4. *Coloring the participation of glocal (global-local) missions.* Facing the digital world, inspired by the thinking of Charles van Engen on the Glocal Church, the transformation of GKE into becoming an ecumenical, national church involves participation in maintaining local Kalimantan traditions, bridging local and global interactions, all while simultaneously moving to embrace globalization and digitalization. GKE has become glocal in its essence, glocal in its theology, and glocal in its missional call (Bdk. Van Engen 2006, 157). GKE is committed to extending the love of Christ to all people and creation without the boundaries of ethnicity, church, nation, and even religion. Truly, this is the unity of a church that embraces nationality, diversity/difference, and universality.
5. *Ecumenical-nationalist reconstruction.* The GKE of the past viewed ecumenism as a “border” that it was enough for GKE to stand in Kalimantan, hoping that all Christians from other islands would, with love, serve together at GKE. In reality, however, Christian friends from other churches established their own churches, largely without permission from GKE. In the past, GKE viewed other churches as friends with love, therefore encouraging its members who migrated to non-GKE zones to be loyal and serve what churches were available. The reality is that the churches that interested GKE’s members continued to grow bigger, but there were no words of affection for GKE in return. In the past, GKE understood in a nationalist sense that territorial ministry for Indonesians in Kalimantan was more than enough, yet the nationalist view for GKE remained unripe. In various ways, whether betrayal of unity or national injustice, GKE marched towards the nation’s capital so that ecumenical and national access would be stronger and more impactful. GKE reconstructs that “ecumenism without regional borders is a cooperation of unity where challenges confront and suppress humanity and creation” (perhaps this is also an argument for the mission of another church in Kalimantan). But one interesting point from the past year is that it was the nation’s capital that visited GKE. The capital was no longer in

Kalimantan: then, how is GKE's ecumenism and nationalism constructed? It seems that a new article is needed to examine how GKE reconstructs unity and nationality in an era of a new capital city.

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# **GKE: REFLEKSI GEREJA ETNISITAS- TERITORIAL MENJADI NASIONALIS- EKUMENIS**

*Pdt. Kinurung Maleh, D.Th*

## **PENDAHULUAN**

Tahun 1950 merupakan era reformasi Gereja Kalimantan Evangelis (GKE) menuju gereja nasionalis-ekumenis. Perubahan nama Gereja Dayak Evangelis (GDE) yang eksklusif kepada Suku Dayak menjadi Gereja Kalimantan Evangelis merupakan langkah berani dan bijak untuk menerima dan melayani semua suku bangsa non-Dayak yang ada di Kalimantan. Menegaskan komitmen tersebut, Peraturan GKE/ Tata Gereja GKE sejak 1950–2010 menyatakan bahwa GKE hanya berada di Pulau Kalimantan atau tidak mendirikan gereja di luar Kalimantan. Sebuah idealisme ekumenis yang tinggi. Mewujudkan komitmen tersebut, GKE juga mengajak semua anggotanya yang merantau ke luar Kalimantan untuk menjadi anggota gereja yang ada. Bagaimana paradigma nasionalis-ekumenis yang dipahami dan dipraktikkan oleh GKE abad ke-20?

Perkembangan GKE mengalami dinamika di awal abad ke-21 ketika terlontar gagasan untuk mendirikan jemaat di luar Kalimantan. Gagasan ini diterima dan ditetapkan dalam Sinode Umum XXII Tahun 2010 bahwa “GKE adalah persekutuan jemaat-jemaat yang ada di pulau Kalimantan, dan tempat lain di Indonesia”

(MS GKE 2015, 5). Pada Maret 2017, berdirilah untuk pertama kali Jemaat GKE DKI Jakarta di luar Kalimantan yang menegaskan era baru GKE. Pertanyaan kritis lahir: Mengapa GKE merubah komitmen ekumenis dengan mendirikan gereja di luar Kalimantan? Bagaimana paradigma nasional-ekumenis GKE di abad ke-21 ini?

## **LAHIR DAN TUMBUHNYA GKE**

Buku Pdt. Fridolin Ukur, *Tuaiannya Sungguh Banyak* (1960), menjadi rujukan utama untuk mengenal sejarah dan eksistensi GKE. Pada awal Bab I, Ukur menyatakan bahwa lahirnya GKE merupakan hasil Pekabaran Injil Abad ke-19 oleh Zending Barmen - Rheinische Missiongesellschaft.

Di tahun 1830, tersiarlah berita-berita mengenai Pulau Kalimantan di tanah Jerman, dengan cerita mengenai ratusan ribu Suku Dayak yang masih jauh tertinggal dalam peradaban dan yang tak pernah mendengar tentang Terang Injil itu. Berita-berita ini telah membakar kerinduan orang-orang Kristen di tanah Jerman, untuk pergi - menemui saudara-saudaranya suku bangsa Dayak serta membawa Terang yang besar itu, Berita Keselamatan dalam Kristus Yesus, bagi mereka yang masih duduk di dalam kegelapan. Empat tahun kemudian, dalam suatu sidang umum dari Rheinische Mission, tanggal 4 Juni 1834, diputuskanlah untuk menjadikan Pulau Kalimantan sebagai suatu daerah Pekabaran Injil yang baru. Kerinduan dan kesadaran kasih ini kemudian terwujud, yakni pada tanggal 15 Juli 1834, ketika dua orang penginjil ditahbiskan di Barmen dan diutus selaku penginjil-penginjil Barmen yang pertama... Kedua Penginjil itu Barnstein dan Heyer (Ukur 2000, 8).

Tanggal 26 Juni 1835, J.H. Barnstein menginjakkan kaki di Banjarmasin, Bumi Kalimantan, sementara Hayer karena kondisi kesehatan harus kembali ke Tanah Jerman tanpa sempat ke Kalimantan. Tanggal kedatangan Barnstein tersebut ditetapkan GKE sebagai Hari Pekabaran Injil. Hampir 30 tahun lamanya Barnstein menginjili di Kalimantan, dan dikebumikan di Banjarmasin tanggal 11 Oktober 1863. Ukur dengan penuh kasih menulis:

Barnstein akan tetap merupakan nama yang indah dalam sejarah GKE. Selama ia hidup, ia benar-benar merupakan hamba Kristus yang setia, yang telah bekerja di antara segala golongan/suku bangsa di Banjarmasin. Baik mereka yang beragama Islam dan Kaharingan, maupun saudara-saudara bangsa Tionghoa dan bangsa Kulit Putih merasakan Kasih yang menyala dan memberikan diri itu yang ditampakkan dalam keseluruhan hidupnya (Ukur 2000, 9-10).

Buah pertama penginjilan dalam rupa pertobatan di Kalimantan dinyatakan dengan pembaptisan pertama pada tanggal 10 April 1839 di Bethabara - Palingkau oleh Hupperts. Peristiwa ini dicatat GKE sebagai cikal bakal GDE yang selanjutnya berubah menjadi GKE (MS GKE 2015, 3). Buah pertama penginjilan rupa lain yang diterima warga Dayak di wilayah Palingkau yaitu pelayanan kesehatan/pengobatan dan pendidikan (Ukur 2000, 10). Peristiwa lain yang penting dicatat pada masa Zending Barmen yaitu Perang Banjar (1859-1866) yang menyebabkan penginjilan mengalami kemunduran dan menyisakan catatan kelam atas dibunuhnya lima misionaris dan keluarganya (Ariawan 2020, 102). Pada tahun 1866 Pemerintah Kolonial Belanda mengizinkan kembali para Misionaris mengadakan penginjilan di daerah-daerah permukiman orang-orang Dayak. Pelayanan ini berlangsung hingga tahun 1914, saat terjadi Perang Dunia I di mana Zending mengalami pergumulan pelayanan.

Tahun 1920, pelayanan yang dilakukan oleh Zending Barmen mengalami kesulitan keuangan dan komunikasi akibat Perang Dunia Pertama. Selama 85 tahun pelayanan, Zending Barmen membaptis kurang lebih 5000 jiwa, menahbiskan 14 Penginjil Dayak dan 39 penatua, serta mendirikan 11 pangkalan induk. Pelayanan di Kalimantan diserahkan kepada Zending Basel dengan masa transisi selama lima tahun (1920-1925). Pada masa transisi ini, empat penginjil pertama Zending Basel diutus ke Kalimantan yaitu H. Henking, G. Weiler, F. Kuhnle, dan J. Huber. Kemudian, pada tanggal 1 April 1925, berangkatlah rombongan terakhir dari Penginjil Barmen meninggalkan Kalimantan yaitu K. Eppele, C. Hendrich, M. Anskhol, dan H. Lampmann. Ukur dengan indah melukiskan proses transisi ini "Mereka yang menanam telah berangkat, tibalah mereka yang bertugas menyiram. Yang menanam dan menyiram pun menjadi sama, tetapi yang menumbuhkan hanya Allah sendiri"

(Ukur 2000, 21–24). Sampai tahun 1960 tercatat ada 54 misionaris Barmen dan 66 misionaris Basel.

Sepuluh tahun pelayanan (1925–1935), dengan jumlah pertobatan warga jemaat yang semakin besar, wilayah pelayanan yang semakin luas, metode penginjilan yang semakin dinamis, dan penahbisan lima pendeta Dayak Pertama, dalam Sinode I 1935 di Barimba, 8 misionaris Zending Basel bersama dengan 30 utusan Dayak Kristen menetapkan berdirinya GDE. GDE merupakan persekutuan jemaat-jemaat yang telah dibentuk oleh Zending Barmen dan Zending Basel di Kalimantan. Poin penting yang perlu digarisbawahi sampai terbentuknya GDE bahwa baik Zending Barmen maupun Zending Basel melayani dengan sungguh dan menghasilkan buah. Dengan fokus kepada proklamasi Injil dan pertobatan, dikembangkan misi holistik meliputi pendidikan, kesehatan, pertanian, publikasi, persahabatan, kontekstualisasi, dan pembebasan budak. Lima belas tahun kemudian GDE mereformasi diri dengan nama GKE. Dalam pembukaan Tata Gereja GKE dirangkum secara eksklusif perubahan nama tersebut:

“Selanjutnya didasari oleh kesadaran akan panggilan selaku gereja yang diutus ke dalam dunia, dijiwai semangat oikumenis dan paham kebangsaan, maka pada Sinode Umum V GDE tanggal 5–9 November 1950 di Banjarmasin, nama Gereja Dayak Evangelis diubah menjadi Gereja Kalimantan Evangelis disingkat GKE” (MS GKE 2015, 3).

Pada tahun 1988, GKE untuk pertama kali merumuskan GBTP Jangka Panjang 25 Tahun dengan tujuan mewujudkan kemandirian teologi, daya, dan dana; dengan peningkatan kualitas sumber daya sebagai langkah yang paling strategis (Tawar Soewardji 2005, 54). Sejak tahun 2015, dalam Sinode Umum GKE, visi strategis GKE untuk Jangka Panjang diarahkan kepada *terwujudnya warga GKE yang misioner* dengan tugas panggilan utama melanjutkan peningkatan kualitas dan kuantitas kemandirian GKE bidang teologi, daya dan dana (MS GKE 2015, 3).

Berdasarkan visi dan tujuan tersebut, sampai hari ini GKE tetap setia melayani warga Dayak dan seluruh suku bangsa di Kalimantan dan Indonesia. GKE juga tetap mempertahankan namanya dan menetapkan Hari Lahir GKE berdasarkan pembaptisan pertama yaitu 10 April 1839 di Kampung Bethabara. GKE tahun ini berusia

182 tahun dengan anggota gereja berjumlah 324.801 jiwa di 1.265 jemaat dengan dilayani oleh 953 pekerja (BPH MS GKE 2020, 1). Dengan perkembangan tersebut, GKE terus bertumbuh seiring makin bertambah usia.

## **GDE: EKSKLUSIF DAYAK?**

Ukur menyatakan bahwa Keputusan untuk membentuk GDE murni merupakan kerinduan orang Dayak untuk bertanggung jawab sepenuhnya dalam Pemberitaan Injil untuk suku bangsa Dayak dan masyarakat di Kalimantan. Kerinduan ini mendapat respons yang sangat positif oleh Zending Basel yang mempersiapkan eksistensi GDE dengan mendirikan Sekolah Pendeta (1932), kesempatan kepemimpinan di tingkat sinode, dan dukungan daya dan dana (Ukur 2000, 35-40). Senada, Marko Mahin menulis:

“Kenapa disebut Gereja Dayak, tentu saja karena tujuan utamanya adalah dalam rangka melayani dan memajukan bangsa Dayak. Kemudian sebagai “petanda” bahwa GDE bukanlah gereja Belanda atau gereja penjajah. Kata “Dayak” untuk menunjukkan bahwa GDE adalah gerejanya orang-orang bumiputera Kalimantan” (Rama Tulus & Marko Mahin 2005, xiii).

Kesulitan pelayanan oleh Zending Barmen akibat perang dunia I dan penyerahan kepada Zending Barmen menggerakkan idealisme Dayak Kristen untuk berdiri sendiri dalam ikatan satu gereja. Ukur mencatat bahwa inisiatif untuk membentuk GDE sudah dimulai sejak tahun 1926, mengakar kuat dengan meletakkan dasar-dasar organisatoris pada pertemuan pendeta dan penganjur 1930, dan ditetapkan pada Sinode I tahun 1935 di Barimba (Ukur 2000, 35-39).

Pertanyaannya, apakah pelayanan GDE eksklusif oleh dan bagi suku Dayak? Sejarah mencatat bahwa nama GDE memang sangat kental dengan pelayanan oleh dan untuk suku Dayak di Kalimantan. Namun demikian, keterbukaan terhadap pelayanan oleh dan bagi suku bangsa lain tetap dibuka. Pembentukan GDE 1935 juga merupakan peristiwa nasional ekumenis dalam rupa yang terbatas. Peristiwa historis tersebut tertutup karena penilaian perubahan nama GDE menjadi GKE merupakan satu-satunya momen istimewa bagi sikap nasionalis-ekumenis di GKE. Ketika GDE dibentuk, paling tidak ada empat suku bangsa berbeda yang

menyatu: Dayak, Tionghoa, Eropa, dan mungkin Banjar. GDE juga mempersatukan setidaknya tujuh suku sub-Dayak: Samihim, Ngaju (Katingan, Mentaya, Kapuas) Punan, Ot Danum, Tomun, Maanyan, dan Dusun. Suku Dayak ini mempunyai bahasa, tradisi, dan wilayah (aliran sungai) yang berbeda-beda. Dari perspektif denominasi, GDE juga mempersatukan jemaat dengan latar belakang aliran Lutheran (Barmen), Calvinis (Basel), dan Pietis-Anglican (Halle-Danish) (Stephen Neil 1990, 236).

Jika tidak bisa sepenuhnya dikategorikan sebagai gereja nasionalis-ekumenis, gerakan dan warna nasional dan ekumenis sudah lahir dan tumbuh dengan pembentukan GDE. Kata Dayak sendiri tidak bisa ditafsirkan terlalu sempit oleh dan untuk suku Dayak. Angkatan II, lulusan Sekolah Pendeta GDE menahbiskan seorang Tionghoa, Thio Kiong Djin, menjadi pendeta dengan tugas khusus di antara golongan Tionghoa. Juga, seorang Dayak Meratus-Labuhan, Yonias Songan, ditahbiskan menjadi pendeta dengan tugas khusus menginjili masyarakat Islam yang kuat dan fanatik di Hulu Sungai - Kalimantan Selatan (Ukur 2000, 42-43).

## **GDE KE GKE: REFORMASI?**

Perubahan nama GDE menjadi GKE ditetapkan dalam Sinode V GKE pada tanggal 5-9 November 1950 di Banjarmasin. Perubahan ini diterima dengan penuh kesadaran demi kemandirian, kebangsaan, dan keesaan. Berdasarkan penelitian terhadap beberapa sumber sejarah GKE dan karya ilmiah mahasiswa STT GKE, dideskripsikan beberapa faktor perubahan dan dampak nama GDE ke GKE:

1. Kemandirian Gereja. Pengaruh jangka panjang Perang Dunia II dan Pendudukan Jepang di Kalimantan membuka mata GDE bahwa pendeta dan warga GDE sendiri mampu mempertahankan eksistensi gereja. Baik penangkapan dan pengasingan para misionaris oleh pasukan Belanda dan Jepang, maupun terputusnya bantuan dan komunikasi dari Zending Basel, tidak membuat GDE terhenti walaupun menghadapi tantangan yang berat. Tekanan dari Jepang terhadap GDE secara langsung juga tidak menghentikan pelayanan dan penginjilan. GDE mengambil kebijakan untuk membagikan sendi-sendi kehidupan gereja kepada jemaat-jemaat lokal di pedesaan tanpa menunggu bantuan dan koordinasi dengan zending, sinode, dan resort (Ukur 2000, 58). Dalam masa yang penuh tekanan

itu juga, untuk pertama kalinya GDE langsung diketuai orang Dayak Kristen yaitu W.A. Samat yang menyatakan bahwa GDE tidak terikat dengan Zending, tetapi menurut Panggilan Tuhan Yesus sesuai kehendak Alkitab (Ukur 2000, 59, 235). Sejak itu kepemimpinan gereja berada di tangan pendeta dan warga Dayak (Pendeta Nasional), sementara pendeta zending ditempatkan sebagai penasihat. Perubahan nama GDE ke GKE menjadi era baru kemandirian sebagaimana dirumuskan Tata Gereja GKE pasal 3 bahwa GKE merupakan Gereja yang berdiri sendiri dan melaksanakan penginjilan sendiri. Untuk itu, pihak zending mengakuinya, menyerahkan seluruh pelayanan dan bersedia bekerja sama dengan GKE (Ukur 2000, 73), walaupun pengaruh Zending Basel masih kuat, baik daya dan dana maupun teologi hingga di akhir abad ke-20.

2. Kemajemukan Suku Bangsa di Kalimantan. Tjilik Riwut mendaftarkan Suku Dayak dalam 7 rumpun utama yang terbagi dalam 18 sub suku dan dibagi lagi dalam anak 405 suku kekeluargaan (Tjilik Riwut 1993,234). Setiap anak suku mempraktikkan bahasa dan tradisi yang berbeda, walaupun ada kemiripan. Pluralitas ini juga semakin kaya dalam perjumpaan dengan suku lain di Kalimantan yaitu Banjar, Melayu, dan China, di samping kedatangan suku-suku dari pulau lain di nusantara seperti Jawa, Batak, dan Bugis. GDE memahami bahwa eksistensinya ditentukan konteks dan keluasan pelayanan, di samping terbangunnya kesadaran bahwa GDE dipanggil dan diutus untuk melayani masyarakat Kalimantan. Perubahan ini melahirkan (teologi) GKE yang Misioner: nama GKE menunjukkan fungsi misionaris gereja bahwa dia ada bukan untuk dirinya sendiri, tetapi bagi dunia dan dalam hal ini bagi masyarakat Kalimantan. Tugas misioner GKE tidak hanya terbatas pada suku dan golongan tertentu, tetapi seluruh suku bangsa yang ada di Kalimantan (Ukur 2000, 72).
3. Nasionalisme Ke-Indonesia-an. Kemerdekaan bangsa Indonesia dari penjajahan Jepang dan Belanda melahirkan nasionalisme tinggi di seluruh wilayah Indonesia, termasuk di Kalimantan. GDE memandang dirinya dan Kalimantan sebagai bagian dari Indonesia, yang juga dipanggil dan diutus untuk melayani seantero negeri ini dengan segenap keanekaragaman suku dan budayanya. Kebangkitan ini dinyatakan oleh Ukur bahwa nama GDE seolah-olah hanya mengutamakan dan teruntuk bagi orang



Dayak dan menutup kemungkinan bagi suku lain di Indonesia yang berada di Kalimantan (Ukur 2000, 22). Pdt. H. Dingang Patianom, Ketua Majelis Sinode menyatakan bahwa perubahan nama GDE menjadi GKE adalah tepat mengenai Kalimantan karena nama GDE eksklusif hanya bagi suku bangsa Dayak Kristen yang melahirkan marginalisasi bagi umat Kristen lain di Kalimantan (Ukur 2000, 72).

4. Kebangkitan Oikumenis: Gerakan oikumene di Indonesia sedang memasuki fase kebangkitan dengan berdirinya Dewan Gereja Sedunia (1948) dan Dewan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia (DGI - 1950). Franedi mengutip Ukur menyatakan bahwa pemikiran oikumene di GDE dimulai sejak Sinode III tahun 1941, digumuli dalam Sinode IV tahun 1946, disusul dengan semangat angkatan muda yang mempersatukan diri dalam Majelis Pemuda Kristen Oikumene di tahun 1948, hingga perubahan nama menjadi GKE. Perubahan nama ini menghapus ketertutupan serta membuka diri GDE ke arah keesaan di Indonesia (Franedi 2000, 31 & Ukur 1979, 277). Nama GKE menunjukkan kesadaran bahwa GKE sebagai bagian yang hidup dalam persekutuan gereja am bergerak bersama menuju keesaan gereja di seluruh wilayah Indonesia, dengan memusatkan usaha penyatuan gereja yang ada di Kalimantan (Ukur 2000, 72).

## **GKE BERWAJAH OIKUMENIS DAN NASIONALIS**

Perubahan nama GDE menjadi GKE menciptakan pelayanan yang lebih terbuka, yakni pelayanan yang mempertimbangkan aspek pluralitas, keesaan, dan kebangsaan. Memperluas pemikiran Franedi, makna perubahan tersebut bagi GKE adalah: 1) Makna Sosial yaitu menerima pluralitas masyarakat Kalimantan dan menempatkan fungsi GKE sebagai bagian integral dari kehidupan sosial masyarakat Kalimantan. Pluralitas masyarakat dan warga GKE harus dipandang sebagai kekuatan sosial yang positif dalam pengembangan gereja; 2) Makna Kultural yaitu menerima GKE bukan gereja suku, tetapi gereja di mana berbagai suku bangsa disatukan. GKE tidak hanya terikat dan mempribumikan tradisi Dayak, tetapi mengakomodasi dan mengembangkan pelayanan lintas suku dan budaya bangsa Indonesia; 3) Makna Politis yaitu GKE menjadi gereja wilayah dengan pengaruh dan partisipasi

politik yang semakin kuat dalam negara Indonesia. Pelayanan GKE di seluruh wilayah Kalimantan dan kepada semua suku bangsa baik yang kategori suku asli maupun pendatang membuat GKE diterima semua komponen, dan mewakili berbagai suku bangsa di Kalimantan; 5) Makna Teologis yaitu GKE menjadi alat penyelamatan Allah yang universal dan menjadi berkat bagi semua suku bangsa di muka bumi. GKE dipanggil dan diutus lintas batas suku dan budaya serta kepada semua ciptaan (Bdk. Franedi 2000, 31–41), semua golongan dan semua agama (Mujiburrahman 2008, 378). 4) Makna Keadilan Gender yaitu kesediaan menerima dan memberdayakan kaum perempuan sebagai pendeta GKE dengan penghargaan dan hak yang sama dengan pendeta laki-laki.

Realitas yang terjadi sampai saat ini bahwa GKE berhasil bertransformasi menjadi gereja ekumenis-nasionalis. GKE membuka pintu lebar untuk menerima semua suku bangsa dan semua gereja untuk menjadi pemimpin, pelayan, dan anggota GKE. Dalam tulisan sederhana ini, beberapa wajah ekumenis-nasionalis GKE ditampilkan:

1. Pimpinan tertinggi GKE baik di tingkat Sinode dan Perguruan Tinggi Teologi maupun Lembaga dan Ketua Resort/Jemaat oleh orang non-Dayak. GKE pernah dipimpin oleh Ketua Umum Majelis Sinode dan Sekretaris Umum Majelis Sinode dari Suku Jawa. Pada periode yang sama Sekolah Tinggi Teologi GKE dipimpin dari Suku Batak, dan Ketua Yayasan Pendidikan Teologi GKE dipimpin oleh Suku Toraja. Sampai hari ini, puluhan Resort dan Jemaat GKE dipimpin dan dilayani oleh pendeta-pendeta dari berbagai suku bangsa seperti Jawa, Batak, Manado, Flores, Ambon, Papua, Tionghoa, Banjar, dll.
2. Pendeta GKE lintas suku bangsa, anggota jemaatnya lintas suku bangsa. Dalam dua dekade terakhir GKE menerima calon pelayanan dari luar Kalimantan, tidak lulusan STT GKE, dan berasal dari gereja lain. Penerimaan ini menunjukkan nilai dan praktik kebangsaan serta keesaan yang matang. GKE membuka diri tidak hanya kepada berbagai suku bangsa dan gereja yang ada di Kalimantan, tetapi juga yang berasal dari luar Kalimantan. Pada saat yang sama, anggota jemaat dan fungsionaris GKE juga terdiri dari berbagai suku bangsa. Dengan rendah hati, mungkin hampir semua suku bangsa yang ada di Indonesia ada di GKE.

3. GKE pernah bertahan dengan kekhasannya untuk tidak mendirikan GKE di luar Kalimantan. Komitmen ini bertahan sampai tahun 2010. GKE bahkan mengajak anggotanya yang berada di luar Kalimantan untuk bergabung dengan gereja yang ada. Tidak ada pemikiran untuk mendirikan GKE di luar tanah Kalimantan, walaupun ada ribuan anggota jemaat GKE “hijrah” dengan posisi yang sangat strategis di luar Kalimantan. Pada saat yang sama GKE juga tidak memaksakan anggota gereja lain yang datang ke Kalimantan untuk wajib masuk GKE. Mereka bisa memutuskan untuk mendirikan gereja sendiri atau bergabung dengan gereja lain.
4. GKE merupakan salah satu pionir dan pendukung berdirinya DGI. GKE berpartisipasi dan berinisiatif dalam berbagai kegiatan ekumenis baik bersama dengan DGI/PGI maupun secara independen dengan gereja-gereja yang ada di Kalimantan. Fridolin Ukur, E. Saloh, Chr. A. Kiting, Teras Narang, dan Darius Dubut merupakan beberapa wakil GKE yang pernah berkiprah aktif di kepemimpinan DGI/PGI. Bahkan dalam hak keuangan, GKE merupakan gereja terbesar yang bekerja sama dalam pengelolaan dana pensiun PGI. GKE juga terdaftar sebagai anggota WCC, WARC, dan CCA, serta mengembangkan relasi inklusif ekumenis dengan 50 lembaga mitra (BPH MS GKE 2020, 112).
5. Visi, misi, dan program strategis GKE senantiasa mempertimbangkan porsi pelayanan kebangsaan dan keesaan. Koinonia, Marturia, dan Diakonia GKE selalu memberi ruang bagi semua warga gereja untuk berpartisipasi aktif melayani negara, masyarakat, gereja-gereja, dan semua ciptaan. Demikian juga formasi teologis GKE berbasis biblis memberi warna bagi relasi oikumene yang tinggi. Maleh menulis “GKE dipanggil oleh Yesus Kristus ke dalam dunia selaku utusan Kristus yang hidup melalui persekutuan, kesaksian dan pelayanan. Untuk mewujudkan panggilan dan pengutusan tersebut usaha dan kerja sama oikumene menjadi bagian yang hakiki. Pertimbangan teologis di atas mengisyaratkan hubungan sebab akibat. Komitmen bahwa GKE hanya di pulau Kalimantan karena dipengaruhi oleh kerangka pengakuan teologi oikumene, dan sebaliknya pengakuan dan pengutusan GKE memengaruhi hubungan oikumene” (Kinurung Maleh 2008, 3).

6. GKE mengembangkan liturgi interaksi budaya dan ibadah *hybrid*. GKE mengolah liturgi yang sangat kontekstual dan kreatif dalam menjawab keanekaragaman tradisi suku bangsa jemaat GKE. Dominasi liturgi budaya Eropa abad pertengahan memang masih kuat di GKE, namun liturgi budaya Dayak dengan dimensi *Kaharingan* cukup umum diterima, juga ruang bagi tampilan bahasa, simbol, kidung, serta tarian dari suku bangsa lain sangat terbuka. GKE memiliki wajah gereja misioner yang kaya dengan ekspresi budaya nusantara. Seirama, interaksi eklesiastikal, khususnya dengan aliran Pentakosta (Kharismatik) dan Injili, menciptakan liturgi *hybrid* GKE. Hal yang lumrah dijumpai kidung pujian populer, khotbah tanpa mimbar, iringan musik band lengkap dengan *song and worship leaders*, serta tema khotbah yang mengedepankan “kemakmuran dan kesuksesan.” Liturgi *hybrid* dipraktikkan dalam ibadah Minggu, perayaan-perayaan gerejawi dan lebih lagi dalam pelayanan kategorial anak-anak, remaja, dan pemuda. Kekentalan Pekabaran Kabar Baik GKE dalam dekade terakhir juga dipicu oleh ledakan penginjilan (*Evangelism Explosion*) yang kuat dari aliran Pentakosta dan Injili.

Banyak contoh lain yang bisa dideskripsikan untuk membuktikan wajah nasional-ekumenis GKE. Namun ada pertanyaan menggelitik, apakah GKE sungguh gereja ekumenis-nasionalis sejati? Apakah yang mengusik GKE sehingga mendirikan gereja di luar Kalimantan? Kritik Mahin 15 tahun lalu bisa menjadi cambuk:

“Namun sangat disayangkan, niat suci para pimpinan GKE pada waktu itu terhadap pergantian nama itu (*GDE ke GKE*), membuat gereja menjadi “banci” dalam identitasnya. Mau menjadi gereja wilayah yang melayani semua orang Kristen di pulau Kalimantan ternyata tidak mampu bahkan tidak diterima. Ternyata mayoritas orang Batak lebih suka dengan HKBP-nya dan orang Ambon serta Manado lebih suka dengan GPIB-Nya. Akhirnya tinggallah orang Dayak yang bingung karena terlanjur memakan bulat-bulat semangat oikumenis Barat dan memuntah habis identitas diri sendiri dengan menanggalkan nama Gereja Dayak Evangelis. Perubahan nama itu kini menjadi “simbol pengkhianatan gerakan oikumenis di Indonesia,” karena GKE dengan setia

tidak mendirikan gereja di luar Kalimantan, tetapi gereja-gereja dari luar Kalimantan berlomba-lomba mendirikan gerejanya di Kalimantan, seolah-olah Kalimantan tidak ada GKE. GKE dengan sukarela menerima seimannya dari berbagai suku dan gereja untuk menjadi pendeta GKE, namun tidak ada orang Dayak menjadi pendeta di HKBP, GKJ, atau yang lainnya” (Mahin 2005, XIII-XIV).

Maleh melangkah lebih jauh dengan menggagas pendirian GKE di luar Kalimantan. Dalam artikel berjudul “Apakah Gereja Kalimantan Evangelis Hanya Cukup Ada di Pulau Kalimantan?” yang dimuat di Jurnal STT GKE, Vol. II, 2008, Maleh memandang bahwa realitas oikumene dari gereja-gereja lain tidak positif dalam membangun keesaan gereja di Kalimantan. Menurutnya, tiga dasawarsa terakhir, pertumbuhan gereja-gereja baru sangat tinggi. Kemunculan gereja-gereja baru di Kalimantan, dirasa lebih banyak mengambil “domba” GKE, memicu konflik dan menyisihkan GKE daripada menunjukkan pengakuan dan kerja sama dengan GKE. Kenyataan ini mempertanyakan “idealisme oikumene” (Maleh 2008, 4). Catatan dari Mahin dan Maleh, bisa menjadi tampanan pipi kanan bagi GKE juga tampanan pipi kiri bagi hakikat oikumene Indonesia.

Pada dimensi netral, perubahan Tata Gereja GKE yang mengantar pendirian GKE di luar Kalimantan mesti dipandang dalam kacamata keesaan dan nasionalisme. GKE menyadari bahwa teologi oikumene tidak bisa dibatasi oleh “tempat dan sejarah” tetapi kebutuhan konteks dan tantangan pelayanan. Di mana ada ketidakadilan, penindasan, atau keterpurukan, di sana GKE harus hadir. Keputusan ini juga membuka kesempatan lebih besar bagi pekerja GKE bersaing pada pelayanan dan kepemimpinan di tingkat nasional dan internasional. Di samping menjawab kerinduan warga GKE dan Dayak di perantauan, langkah ini telah memperkaya wawasan, pergaulan, dan pelayanan pendeta GKE, termasuk pengembangan diri melalui pendidikan, akses informasi terbaru dan membina relasi dengan tokoh-tokoh nasional, ternama dan berwibawa. GKE semakin luas dan dalam berkarya untuk keesaan dan kebangsaan (Bdk. Maleh 2008, 5). Dengan pandangan ini, tujuan GKE mengembangkan diri di luar Kalimantan merupakan ekspresi wajah nasionalis-ekumenis.

## REFLEKSI

Bagian refleksi ini memberi irama dan dinamika bahwa gereja yang inklusif, nasionalis, dan ekumenis menciptakan pengembaraan yang lebih universal dalam menghadir-aksikan misi Allah dan mewujudkan-nyatakan kasih Allah bagi semua dalam keragaman suku bangsa dan denominasi gereja.

1. *Kemandirian gereja berdampak komprehensif.* Motif teologi, komitmen iman dan aneka peristiwa berjumpa untuk menyatukan tujuan GKE mandiri. Nama GKE merupakan representasi kemandirian gereja pertama di Kalimantan. Kemandirian juga tidak lahir bagi dirinya sendiri, dia mendorong nilai dan praktik kebangsaan, keesaan, dan ke-misioner-an. Itulah langkah berani dan bijak GKE sehingga hadir sebagai sebuah gereja yang tidak terbatas kepada satu suku, satu wilayah, dan satu denominasi. Sampai hari ini kata kemandirian menjadi kekuatan bagi GKE untuk mengembangkan pelayanan dan kemitraan yang didasarkan atas nilai nasionalisme dan oikumenisme. Tawar Soewardji, Ketua Umum MS GKE 2005–2010 menyatakan bahwa sejak 1988–2013 (Program Jangka Panjang GKE I) kemandirian menjadi kata kunci untuk memahami GKE, kata utama menggerakkan GKE, dan kata akhir untuk mencapai GKE yang maju dan berkualitas (Soewardji 2005, 51–71). Sejak tahun 2015–2040 (Program Jangka Panjang GKE II), kata kemandirian masih melekat kuat dalam harmonisasi dengan kata “misioner.” (MS GKE 2015, 3)
2. *Perbedaan dan keragaman adalah jati diri Gereja.* Keunikan GKE dengan Dayak-nya dan Kalimantan-nya merupakan jati diri alami yang terus dilestarikan. Seirama dengan itu, catatan sejarah menyatakan kesan positif dan indah bagaimana GKE menyatukan berbagai suku bangsa dan gereja yang ada di Kalimantan. Menyatukan keragaman tidak hanya sebatas menerima sebagai saudara seiman dalam Tuhan tetapi juga memberdayakan semua sebagai pelayan dan pemimpin. Belajar dari sejarah ini, perbedaan agama, bangsa, dan ciptaan merupakan bagian integral kehidupan GKE karenanya nilai-nilai inklusif-ekumenis harus dikembangkan sepanjang GKE diutus oleh Allah dalam dunia. Pada masa sekarang, di mana perbedaan dan keragaman tidak bisa dibendung lagi bahkan dalam dimensi digital dan *eklesia-hybrid*, gereja sewajarnya

menempatkan misi lintas budaya dan lintas liturgi sebagai jati dirinya. Namun demikian bersikap kritis dan berani bagi gereja yang tidak peduli atau menyalahgunakan ekumenisme dan kebangsaan harus dilawan dan dibungkam.

3. *Ekumenisme dan Nasionalisme yang bertumbuh.* Realitas ekumenisme sarat muatan dengan dimensi yang inklusif. Muatan dan inklusifitas ekumenisme GKE bisa dibaca sejak pertemuan misionaris pertama dengan orang Dayak pada tahun 1835 di Kalimantan – perjumpaan beda iman. Perjumpaan ini semakin bertumbuh via GDE 1935 dan GKE 1950, tidak hanya di Kalimantan tetapi juga di luar Kalimantan 2010. Perjumpaan ekumenis bertumbuh secara nasionalis yang berakar dalam “Bahasa dan Tradisi Dayak” dan bertumbuh dalam ragam “Bahasa dan Tradisi Nusantara.” Di abad ke-21, era digitalisasi di mana ekumenisme semakin dinamis dan menantang, GKE dan semua gereja harus memandangnya sebagai ladang pertumbuhan ekumenis yang semakin menguning siap untuk dituai bagi Kemuliaan Allah, Sang Pencipta keragaman.
4. *Mewarna partisipasi misi global (global-lokal).* Mewajah pada dunia digital, terinspirasi oleh pikiran Charles van Engen tentang *Glocal Church*, transformasi GKE menjadi gereja ekumenis nasional merupakan partisipasi menjaga tradisi lokal Kalimantan, menjembatani interaksi lokal dan global, seraya bergerak simultan merangkul globalisasi dan digitalisasi. GKE menjadi global dalam esensinya, global dalam berteologi, dan global dalam panggilan misionalnya (Bdk. Van Engen 2006, 157). GKE berkomitmen untuk memperluas cinta kasih Kristus kepada semua orang dan ciptaan tanpa batas suku, gereja, bangsa, dan bahkan agama. Sejatinya inilah keesaan gereja yang merangkul kebangsaan, keragaman/perbedaan, dan universalitas.
5. *Re-konstruksi Ekumenis-Nasionalis.* Masa lalu GKE memandang ekumenisme sebagai “batas wilayah” bahwa GKE cukup berdiri di Kalimantan sehingga berharap semua orang Kristen dari pulau lain dengan cinta melayani bersama di GKE. Namun realitasnya, sahabat Kristen dari gereja lain mendirikan gereja sendiri, kebanyakan tanpa permisi dengan GKE. Masa lalu GKE memandang gereja lain sebagai sahabat dengan cinta, karenanya mendorong umatnya yang merantau ke zona non-GKE untuk setia dan melayani gereja yang ada. Realitasnya

gereja yang diminati umat GKE bertambah besar, tapi tiada ucapan mesra untuk GKE. Masa lalu GKE secara nasionalis memahami bahwa pelayanan teritorial bagi bangsa Indonesia di Kalimantan sudah lebih dari cukup, namun lirikan kebangsaan bagi GKE terasa belum matang. Dalam aneka rasa, entah pengkhianatan keesaan atau ketidakadilan kebangsaan, GKE berarak menuju Ibu Kota Negara agar akses oikumene dan nasional semakin kuat dan berdampak. GKE merekonstruksi bahwa “ekumenisme tanpa batas wilayah sebagai kerja sama keesaan di mana masalah menghadang dan menindas kemanusiaan dan ciptaan” (mungkin ini juga argumen misi gereja lain berdiri di Kalimantan). Tetapi satu hal yang menarik di tahun terakhir, bahwa Ibu Kota Negara yang menjumpai GKE. Ibu Kota tidak lama lagi berada di Kalimantan: lalu, bagaimana konstruksi ekumenisme dan nasionalisme GKE? Sepertinya perlu artikel baru untuk meneliti bagaimana GKE merekonstruksi keesaan dan kebangsaan di era Ibu Kota baru.

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# THE CONTEXTUAL DILEMMA OF EMPHASIZING IDENTITY IN HETEROGENEOUS CHURCHES AND COMMUNITIES IN INDONESIA

*Rev. Dr. Uwe Hummel*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Both having a distinct identity and being open to others is usually considered as a strong and steady character. We all know how superficial (and often boring) a person can be who doesn't know what he or she stands for while always following the broad stream or latest trends. Conversely, a person who is constantly asserting his or her own standpoint or traditional belief while blocking off other opinions or world-views, comes across as stubborn and an unfit team-worker. You really need both, authenticity and open-mindedness. Usually others, who are both steady and tolerant, appreciate such an attitude in a partner, albeit he or she may be quite different. What applies to individuals, often also applies to communities. For Protestant churches in Indonesia, for example,<sup>1</sup> it often is rather difficult to find a healthy balance between identity

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<sup>1</sup> Indonesia (before 1945/1949 *Nederlands Indië*) is a huge archipelago consisting of 17.000 islands in South-east Asia. Since the author, himself a German, worked for many years on Nias on the west coast of North Sumatra, in Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo) and in Papua ("West Papua", bordering PNG), all of the examples are taken from these three regions.

and openness, especially if the former is hard to assert while the latter is seen as a threat by others.

## II. TRADITION IN CONTEXT

Since Biblical times, both Israel and the Church have been grappling with the challenge of maintaining their identity as God's chosen people, and at the same time adjusting to diverse and always changing surroundings. There were situations, such as during and immediately after the Babylonian exile (6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) or during the Greek occupation of Israel (4<sup>th</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries B.C.), that the maintenance of Jewish identity and the rejection of mainline culture was a matter of national and religious survival. Daniel, according to the Biblical book of that name, neither compromised to Babylonian customs of food nor to worship restrictions by the Persian king. The Biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah are so uncompromising that even mixed marriages had to be dissolved (Ezra 9-10; Neh. 10:31; 13:23-29). According to the Apocryphal account of 1<sup>st</sup> Maccabees 2:29-4:61, Jewish identity was maintained under Greek oppression by rejecting Hellenistic culture completely and taking up arms in the struggle of liberation. Jerusalem was freed and the temple of the LORD, which had been defiled by Greek idols, was rededicated. Almost concurrently, however, the scribes of Israel adapted elements from Mesopotamian stories (e.g., in the creation narratives, Genesis 1-2), adjusting them to the creed of Israel. Even the language of the Greek oppressors was used by Jewish scribes to translate the Bible, creating the so-called Septuagint or LXX, opening the Biblical message to both Jews in the diaspora and other seekers who were drawn to the faith in the God of Israel. The dilemma that the language, the religion and other cultural elements of the despised oppressor become valuable assets of one's own identity, is an experience still made by millions of people of formerly colonized nations.

The early church was tempted by all kinds of popular philosophies or "theosophies", such as Gnosticism, teaching an exclusive, secretive divine knowledge as a means of salvation. This threat moved the church fathers to take precautionary measures, such as finally fixing the Biblical canon as the authoritative norm against new revelations and speculations, as well as formulating confessions of faith and determining an organisational hierarchy to protect the truth from heresy. But, despite the sense of high

alert against corruption and assimilation, the church did also take over concepts and structures of the Graeco-Roman context. In Western Catholicism, the Latin language became the standard for the liturgy, the Bible and theology. Such dialectic tension between maintaining identity (i.e., the sacred tradition) and making prudent use of the means of the dominant culture and civilization was the fertile soil in which the early church flourished.

The Reformation in the western Roman Catholic Church of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in essence, was a protest against the loss of the original identity of the early church. At the same time, it demanded an opening towards the local, national cultures. Not only did Martin Luther, John Calvin, and others challenge the scholastic theology and the absolutist authority of the Roman hierarchy by referring to holy Scripture and the early church, but they also applied what they considered the truth of the Gospel to their respective local contexts. Both Luther and Calvin were keen to restore the original teachings and (to a certain extent) the fundamental ministries of the church by studying the Bible thoroughly in her original languages. They carefully heeded how the Good News was understood and transmitted by the Church Fathers and the early Ecumenical Councils (up to the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD). At the same time, they creatively adjusted the message to their context, starting with translations into the German, French and other vernaculars, and then reinventing Biblical ministries to fit the needs of church and society in their respective settings (e.g., Luther's teaching that the "living Word of God" should be communicated in public sermons by the pastor, and in all other professions by witness of the Laity; Calvin's reinvention of the ministry of Deacons in the city of Geneva). Whereas the Reformation had a largely positive impact on the development of the arts and sciences, education, social welfare, democracy, etc., it did also split the church and society, even causing terrible sectarian conflicts through the ages up to this day (e.g. Northern Ireland).

### **III. MISSION IN CONTEXT**

Missionaries always face the difficulty of communicating the universal and timeless truth of the Gospel to cultures that have either not grown from Christian roots (such as in Indonesia) or that have become alienated from them (like a large part of Western secularized society). Naturally, every missionary is to

some degree a child of his/her time and place of origin. The kind of 'Christianity' in which he or she grew up has an influence on his/her understanding of dogmas and values, as well as what is considered 'proper' in church and society. The missionaries of the Rheinisch Missionary Society (RMG), for example, who came to Afrika, the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) and China in the 19<sup>th</sup> century generally had little appreciation for the primal religions and many aspects of indigenous cultures which they considered incompatible with Christianity. So-called idols (mostly sculptures representing ancestors), were banned from the homes of indigenous Christians. Sometimes, raids were carried out confiscating, burning or burying what was considered abominable idols in the eyes of the LORD. Some of these trophies, signifying the victory of the Gospel over the powers of evil, were sent to the mission house of the RMG in Barmen, Germany. At the same time, however, many missionaries had rather awesome portraits of their own parents or grandparents, and sometimes even of the Dutch or German monarch hanging on the walls of their westernised homes. When the missionary was asked by a member of his congregation on Nias what the difference is between those pictures and the *adu zatua* (carved representation of an honourable ancestor of the Ono Niha, usually in wood or stone), the indignant answer was that that was something completely different.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the fact that initially most missionaries and many of their indigenous co-workers considered the traditional culture, and especially the primal religion, largely incompatible with the Gospel, real conversions of whole communities often happened when the new faith somehow connected with the 'archetypes', the patterns and symbols, of the ancient local culture. This happened to some extent through the translations of Bible and Catechism into the vernacular. Quite often a name was chosen for God that carried some of its original meaning into the young church (e.g. *Lowalangi* and *Soaya* on Nias). But, whereas language can strike cognitive assonance (or dissonance), recognisable music may fill one with a sense of awe and excitement.

Music played a major role in the *Fangesa Dödö Zebua* or 'great awakening of the hearts' that turned Nias into a largely Christian society during the years 1915 until 1930 (after western missionaries failed to accomplish this during the 50 years after their arrival in

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Uwe Hummel & Tuhoni Telaumbanua. *Cross and Adu*, 2007, pp. 280–285.

1865). Whereas sociological factors such as the transition from an isolated tribal society into an increasingly connected part of an Indonesian nation played a significant role, it was the authentic witness of the Ono Niha (indigenous people of Nias) themselves that accomplished the breakthrough. Ono Niha witnessed the Gospel to fellow Ono Niha, so to say from village to village, often during feasts (a phenomenon quite similar to parts of Papua)<sup>3</sup> by means of revival songs called *Sinunö Wangesa* (or *Fangesa*) These songs were sung all night long, usually accompanied by charismatic expressions such as dancing, jumping, shouting and even trance. To the missionaries, these were considered excesses, not worthy of Christian standards. They therefore prohibited these songs in the official worship services, alas without much avail. According to Jürgen Kosack, *Sinunö Wangesa* were a significant means for winning the hearts of the Ono Niha for Jesus Christ, albeit the style and sometimes also the contents may be frowned on by academic theologians.<sup>4</sup> Some current leaders of the church of Nias (BNKP), however, proudly recognise the *Sinunö Wangesa* as fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Notwithstanding the great significance that such products of contextualisation have for building the identity of a church, they do form a barrier for other Christians who do not speak the vernacular (*Li Niha*) and do not share this kind of spiritual tradition. This remains, indeed, a contextual dilemma.

#### IV. LOCAL CHURCH IN CONTEXT

Since 1855, the Gospel was proclaimed by German and Dutch missionaries in the Land of Papua, particularly in some coastal regions.<sup>5</sup> The highlands, however, were unknown to outsiders until 1930s. By 1939, both Catholic and Protestant missionaries entered the region of Paniai, then called Wissel Lakes (*Wisselmeeren*) according to one of the first explorers, Frits Julius Wissel. The

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<sup>3</sup> Siegfried Zöllner. "The culture of the Papuans in transition", in *Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in West-Papua*, 2005, pp. 39–91.

<sup>4</sup> Here, the author refers to Jürgen Kosack, "Grundzüge einer Erweckungstheologie in niassischen Erweckungsliedern", 1964. Cf. Uwe Hummel & Tuhoni Telaumbanua. *Cross and Adu*, 2007, pp. 170–171.

<sup>5</sup> In this part, the author only focuses on former Dutch New Guinea, since 1963 belonging to Indonesia. Cf. Jan S. Aritonang et al., *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, 2008, especially "Christianity in Papua", pp. 345–381.

Protestant *Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA)*, however, had great difficulties communicating the Gospel to the indigenous Mee-people in the region. During the Japanese occupation of Paniai (May 1943–August 1945), a local man by the name of Zakheus Package supported the Dutch official, Jean Victor de Bruijn, to escape into remoter parts of the Papuan highlands, eventually to be evacuated from British held Port Moresby to Australia. Zakheus Package, who went along, was trained by C&MA and later sent to study theology in Makassar in Indonesia. In 1950, Zakheus Package returned to Paniai and started communicating the Gospel in a unique yet truly unorthodox way, which found great resonance among the Mee, resulting in mass-conversions and a self-confessed restoration-movement,<sup>6</sup> the “Zakheus’ communities” (also called *Wege Bage*). They took a completely different approach than C&MA. They reinvented their pre-contact history and religion in opposition to both the Western missionaries and the colonial authorities.

The core teachings and programmes of the *Wege Bage* (called “*Wege Mana*”) were re-interpretations of the Mee’s history and religion as “God’s story”.<sup>7</sup> Largely, it was a selective, critical and creative resonance to the dominant doctrinal themes previously taught by the Western missionaries (*ibid.*, p. 47). The *Wege Bage* selected and reinterpreted religious concepts presented to them, such as “God”, “Bible”, “Messiah”, “salvation”, and “eschatology”, because they were familiar and important to them. It was in fact a process of inter-penetration of two systems, the primal religion of the Mee and a certain kind of Presbyterian Christianity.<sup>8</sup> Here are three examples from *Wege Bage* theology (*ibid.*, pp. 41 ff.):

- i. *God/Ugatamee*: A supreme deity has been known and worshipped by the Mee since pre-contact times. He is a male

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<sup>6</sup> Interview by the author with Rev Dr Benny Gay on “*Wege Bage* theology and its impact today”, Waena, 5th June 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Benny Gay, *Zakheus Package and his Communities*, 1995, p. 141. This idea may have originated in C&MA’s Presbyterian theology of the Covenant. The development of the *Wege Mana* was a “dynamic process of interaction and interpretation of Christianity from the point of view of the existing religious ideas ... (which) resulted in a new religious discourse” (*ibid.*, p. 133).

<sup>8</sup> The development of the *Wege Mana* was a “dynamic process of interaction and interpretation of Christianity from the point of view of the existing religious ideas ... (which) resulted in a new religious discourse” (Benny Gay, *Zakheus Package and his Communities*, 1995, p. 133). For a critical reflection on the theology of the *Wege Bage*, see Uwe Hummel, “Ancestors as Saints in the Theology of the *Wege Bage* of Papua, Indonesia”. in: *Communion of Saints in Context*, Eric Trozzo et. al. (eds.), 2020.

deity called Ugatamee or Wado-mee. He created the world, gets involved in its affairs and maintains it until the end. He is the author of salvation. Ugatamee lives in the upper-world. He has a lesser female counterpart (probably a great ancestral spirit) in the underworld, called Nabae or Noukai (see below). Ugatamee is identified as God, the Creator and Father of Jesus Christ.

- ii. *Messiah*: The *Wege Mana* on the Messiah claims that in the remote pre-contact past, there had been a Messianic hero called Koyeidaba. He came from a poor family and was despised in his youth. But later he did miracles, fed the hungry masses, and taught useful doctrines to the Mee based on the Touye Mana, the Mee-Bible, entrusted to him by Ugatamee. After Koyeidaba was killed, the Touye Mana was taken by his sister and lost – allegedly stolen by the “ogai” (foreigners). The *Wege Bage* identify him as Jesus Christ; some even as Zakheus Pakage. This Messiah would bring socio-religious and political restoration. Besides Koyeidaba, the female deity, Nabae, acts as an agent of Ugatamee. Nabae was a mediator who carries out the saving work of Ugatamee and prepared the Mee for the return of Koyeidaba. Nabae is considered as “guardian of the clan”, and can speak on behalf of other spirits, as well as in the name of Jesus Christ (ibid., pp. 135–145).
- iii. *Salvation*: The *Wege Mana* on salvation is highly political. While the C&MA was preaching personal piety and individual salvation in the hereafter, Zakheus Pakage was concerned about the everyday well-being and liberation of his people (ibid. pp. 45, 169). He focussed on community development and implemented new techniques in planting sweet potatoes. Salvation was not an individual matter, but rather a “community affair”. Zakheus Pakage was very concerned about people’s obsession with wealth (i.e. pigs and cowrie shells). For the sake of salvation, he demanded “the abolition of the *mege*” (= money; ibid. pp. 176–177). People should lead a simple but prosperous life, free from hunger (there should be abundance of food), deliverance from sorcery and witchcraft, and political freedom. Based on this understanding of salvation, the *Wege Bage* developed new political visions against foreign intrusion and oppression. *Wege Bage* theology was part of a much wider socio-economic as well as political resistance to foreign



intervention. After Indonesia took over Irian Barat (Papua) on 1 May 1963, the Wege Bage almost immediately turned against the new rulers. The Wege Bage also accused the C&MA of facilitating the Indonesian military who killed some Mee, including pastors.

The C&MA missionaries regarded such teachings as heresy. Consequently, Zakheus Pakage was reviled as being “possessed by the devil” and his Wege Bage communities a bunch of thugs and revolutionaries. Conversely, his followers honoured Zakheus Pakage as a prophet. Some saw him as a Messianic figure who brings socio-political and religious renewal and liberation (*ibid.*, p. 52). Despite Zakheus Pakage’s astonishing success in teaching and drawing multitudes of Mee to Christianity, he was arrested in February 1951, declared mentally ill and incarcerated in a mental hospital. This did not stop his followers from increasing in dramatic numbers. They developed a strong “Christian” identity, separated from Western mission and church and in opposition to all foreigners occupying their land, including Indonesians.

The approach of Zakheus Pakage still kindles the spirit of freedom, justice and peace in the hearts of many Papuans until today. The descendants of the Wege Bage, now largely organized in the Evangelical Tabernacle Church in Papua (KINGMI-Papua), still have a strong identity fostered by its unique contextual theology of liberation. Unfortunately, however, this does not make KINGMI-Papua easily assessable or attractive to most other Christians, even resulting in a split with KINGMI-Indonesia or GKII some years ago.

## **V. CONCLUSION**

Keeping one’s distinct identity is a serious need in a pluralistic society such as Indonesia in which Christianity often is a rather small and vulnerable minority. This need of identity motivates churches to carefully maintain particular, local traditions. Some Protestant churches even make the choice of joining international denominational families (e.g., Calvinist or Lutheran), albeit the former Missionary Societies did not propagate such a specific ‘brand’. Others, such as KINGMI-Papua, distance themselves from a certain historical variant of (western) Christianity and develop a rather exclusive local contextual theology with a strong underlying sense of political liberation. From an ecumenical point of view (let’s

say that of Reformed churches), the *Wege Bage*'s re-interpretation of the Mee's mythological history as "God's story" seems theologically questionable. It can be seen as a kind of syncretism and thus an ecumenical obstacle. But, it cannot be denied that it strengthened a Papuan Christian identity amidst gigantic socio-cultural changes and threats for over 70 years until now.

In the face of Indonesian society becoming more and more heterogeneous (pluralistic), however, ethnic peculiarities in churches make it difficult for Christians from outside to join them. This particularly applies to the use of the vernacular, to certain local musical traditions (such as *Sinunö Wangesa* on Nias), as well as rather 'unorthodox' contextual theologies (such as *Wege Bage* in Papua). Whereas a strong emphasis on authentic, locally grown identity may be an existential need of Indonesian churches, it becomes a 'contextual dilemma' when obstructing ecumenical communion.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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# ECCLESIOLOGY IN THE MIDST OF DIGITALIZATION AND A MODEL OF GLOBAL DIGITAL CHURCH

*Rev. Dr. Marthe Maleke Kondemo*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has brought changes in everything, including religion. We see the church migrating from traditional faith practices to the digital environment. The church is adapting to the limitations and possibilities that the network offers for religious experience and human coexistence. The Church believed that the internet has brought about revolutionary changes not just in how people communicate but in how they understand their lives.<sup>1</sup> Jones states that the recent advent of technological devices, the ‘new media’ and the significant generational differences begat by globalisation have enabled wholly new forms of intra-church and inter-church relationality.<sup>2</sup> The Church needs to engage the lived reality of the world so as to advance its divine mission on

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<sup>1</sup> Pontifical Council for Social Communications. The Church and the internet, [www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/pccs/documents/rc\\_pc\\_pccs\\_doc\\_20020228\\_churchinternet\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_20020228_churchinternet_en.html). (Last retrieved 24 May 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Jones, T, *The Church is Flat: The Relational Ecclesiology of the Emerging Church.* (Minneapolis, MN: Joppa Group, 2011), 1

earth.<sup>3</sup> Today, when the corona virus pandemic has closed places of worship for health and safety reasons, the church has been obliged to examine questions such as, what does it mean to do church online? Could communion still be celebrated? What were the implications for liturgy and theology? These are questions that affect not just church officials, but also their congregations.

For a long time, many churches have resisted change and spoke against considering or even implementing different ideas of being church today. The quest has been to maintain the traditional beliefs and ways of maintaining the practice of churches.<sup>4</sup> Tendencies by the church to focus primarily on religious and social critiques of digitization and digital technology bring the church to miss the point and distract them from taking seriously the reality of the broader technological culture in which they exist. The restrictions of physical gatherings have presented a church with a rare challenge and opportunity to interrogate what it means to meet as a congregation, to be church (body of Christ) without going to church (place of worship). It has forced Christian churches to embrace new possibilities of virtual gathering. Face to the situation, we are challenged theologically on how to understand the presence of Jesus among us as promised, especially when we cannot celebrate sacraments in the same physical space together. This condition is a call for both resilience and adaptation, embracing new ways of doing things and of being church. A part examining the new realities and how they affect the life of the church, this paper attempts to provide some theological reflections on “the problem in the new area to help churches adapt to the “new normal” where online and offline ministry strategies will become part of a “new normal”.<sup>5</sup> What theological issues are raised for institutional churches as they move to an online? How might current experience of doing church during this pandemic shape future ecclesiology? The fact that the Internet and all its applications have invaded every aspect of modern human society means that this form of communication

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<sup>3</sup> Colberg, K, Ecclesiology today and its potential to serve a missionary church. *Missiology*, 46, no.1, 23–36(2018): 25

<sup>4</sup> Jerry Pillay, COVID-19 Shows the Need to Make Church More Flexible at Transformation Vol. 37(4) 266 –275. (2020),265. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265378820963156>

<sup>5</sup> Heidi A Campbell, *An Introduction to Digital Ecclesiology: What Does a Conversation on Digital Ecclesiology Look Like?* In *Digital Ecclesiology: A Global Conversation*, Edited by Heidi A Campbell, (Tx: Digital Religion Publications, 2020), 6 . [www.digitalreligion.tamu.edu](http://www.digitalreligion.tamu.edu), retrieved 26 May 2021

must be reflected upon not only sociologically but also spiritually and theologically.

## II. DEFINING ECCLESIOLOGY

In the New Testament, *ekklēsia* is used to designate the entire body of believing Christians throughout the world (Matthew 16:18), of the believers in a particular area (Acts 5:11), and also of the congregation meeting in a particular house” (Romans 16:5). For Calvin “The church universal is a multitude gathered from all nations; it is divided and dispersed in separate places, but agrees on the one truth of divine doctrine and is found by the bond of the same religion”. For Calvin the true church exists wherever Christ is honoured as the head of the church and this is recognized in the visible church by two significant marks: The Word and the sacraments.<sup>6</sup> Gibbs, states that:

‘church’ must be understood as referring to people rather than to a place, and a congregation represents not just a weekly gathering that people are a part of, but a community in which each person actively belongs, receive support, and is encouraged to make their own distinctive contribution. It consists not of passive consumers, but of creative participants. It is structured not just for attracting a congregation, but also for sending and dispersing people on mission. It is comprised of an extensive network of clusters of believers providing mutual support, as well as engaging the broader networks of relationships of which they are a part. The church is not primarily a place of refuge, but a community of people on pilgrimage.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, the church, *ekklēsia* can be defined as an assembly of people called out by God, who have received and believe in Jesus Christ through faith and live the life of God in Him. In the early period, the church was the visible community of believers who came together for worship, prayer, communal sharing, instruction,

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<sup>6</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. by John T. McNeill and translated by Ford Lewis Battles in *The Library of Christian Classics*, Volumes 20 & 21 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), IV.i.9

<sup>7</sup> Gibbs, *Church Morph: How Megatrends are Reshaping Christian Communities*. (Grand Rapid, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2009), 54–55

reflection, and mission.<sup>8</sup> The post-Reformation ecclesiology considered the church as a community of believers equal in terms of role and function within the church which relies on faith and scripture. This renewed the understanding of the Church as “The Family of God.” Highlighting the element of the Church’s identity, experts have opined that the church points beyond itself to a community which preaches, serves, and witnesses to the reign of God through the Holy Spirit.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the local church is a gathering of those who believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, who are committed to meet regularly for worship, teaching, fellowship, and prayer, and who help make disciples of all people in all nations.

### III. DIGITAL ECCLESIOLOGY

We are now living on a period called digital age, the information age, or the computer age. According to Duc; “what all these different names attempt to convey is a sociological reality where various aspects of human society is run using computer-based technology that enables the transfer of information freely and quickly.”<sup>10</sup> The emerging of the internet introduced new technological developments that vary widely from nation to nation throughout the world. With half the world’s population having access to the Internet, digital interaction is becoming more ubiquitous in human life and is increasingly having profound impacts on human social, mental and spiritual well-being.<sup>11</sup> The digitization of society is leading to the emergence of new forms of community where communication is essential then physical closeness.

Digital ecclesiology has become a popular term over the last decade, surfacing around discussions about churches and their use of technology. It is typically used in broad, undefined ways, either to advocate for church use of digital media, or to debate the social and ethical problems that arise when churches

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<sup>8</sup> Mudge, L.S. *Church: Ecclesiology*. Encyclopedia.com. 2005 [www.encyclopedia.com/environment/encyclopediasalmanacs-transcripts-and-maps/church-ecclesiology](http://www.encyclopedia.com/environment/encyclopediasalmanacs-transcripts-and-maps/church-ecclesiology), Retrieved 23 May 2021

<sup>9</sup> Bevans, S. and Schroeder, R.. *Constants in context: A theology of mission for today*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis 2004),3

<sup>10</sup> Anthony Le Duc, *Cybertheology: Theologizing In the Digital Age* (October 28, 2016). Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3056269>, Retrieved 28 may 2021

<sup>11</sup> Anthony Le Duc, *Cybertheology: Theologizing In The Digital Age*, 2.

integrate internet technologies into their work.<sup>12</sup> The term here is understood as creating a conversation about the relationship of the Christian church to emerging technologies. It is the current forms of online technology integration into church environments and how it informs contemporary mission, ecclesial, and liturgical practice. Digital ecclesiology can be considered as the technological innovation of the engagement of churches as institution, and as Christian communities with digital media and digital cultures. Campbell, describes digital ecclesiology “as a technological space where online and offline religion become mixed and blended spheres, which is in line with her understanding of online and offline communities as complementary and integrated”.<sup>13</sup>

Because of Covid-19, a large number of churches turned to electronic platforms to reach their members and this has given a faster and inevitable rise to the digital church. Helland describes online religion as an acceptable space for spiritual and religious participation where there is no hierarchical segregation and where church members, as well as those who left the church, can be part of an on-going religious dialogue.<sup>14</sup> Online religion could be seen as a medium of nondenominational, non-affiliated religious participation and as an open religious environment that caters for people who want to be religious and spiritual on their own terms.<sup>15</sup> This could imply that in a digital age there is much believing without belonging in the traditional sense.

#### **IV. ECCLESIOLOGY IN THE MIDST OF DIGITALIZATION**

The internet occupies an important place in today’s globalized digital world. Through internet, we keep in touch with family and friends, meet new people, form new relationships, do business and keep updated on news, search for information on anything and the list can go on. Pope John Paul II compared cyberspace to the ancient Roman public forum “where politics and business were

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<sup>12</sup> Heidi A Campbell, *Introduction: Studying Digital Ecclesiology: How Churches are Being Informed by Digital Media and Cultures* In: *Ecclesial Practices* Volume 7: Issue 1, 2020, 1–1 <https://doi.org/10.1163/22144417-bja10001>

<sup>13</sup> (2013:4)

<sup>14</sup> Helland, ‘Popular religion and the World Wide Web: A match made in cyber Heaven’, in L.L. Dawson & D.E. Cowan (eds.), *Religion online: Finding faith on the Internet*, pp. 30–34, (Routledge: London, 2004), 31

<sup>15</sup> Helland, ‘Popular religion and the World Wide Web.’ 34.



transacted, where religious duties were fulfilled, where much of the social life of the city took place, and where the best and the worst of human nature was on display.<sup>16</sup> Campbell regards digital media as a place that gives opportunities to form relationships with a wide and diverse range of people without being bound by geographical space. Online communities therefore transcend geographical and physical space and form a new shared space via digital media.<sup>17</sup> It is used to not only maintain existing relationships, but also to form new social bonds. At the most basic level, churches must interact with new technical and communicative infrastructures in a society undergirded by digital media. They must engage with these to perform the most basic functions in a digital society, such as mailings, record keeping, payrolls, and structural communication.<sup>18</sup> Still, some churches will find interacting with or incorporating digital media more challenging than others.

The way the Church communicates changes what it is. We saw this in the early days of Christianity, with the shift from primarily oral to written communication. Now with the global contagion of the coronavirus, we have moved from face-to face communication to digital communication. In each period of history, a type of ecclesial vision prevailed, and it is related with the characteristic communication of the society.<sup>19</sup> The emergence of a new culture brings new symbolic images for the Church. Thinking about the Church in the digital age, is not only reflecting on the Church form of communication and presence on the internet, but on how it can contribute and be part of the network society from now on. It is not just about its action in the digital environment, but its role in the whole human context.

The closure of churches has turned all churches to worship through radio, TV or Zoom, YouTube and other electronic platforms depending on the location. Until now, churches and many Christians did not think much about “defining church, or consider online

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<sup>16</sup> Pope John Paul II, “Message for World Communication Day 2002” retrieved 28 May 2021, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/communications/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_20020122\\_world-communications-day.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/communications/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20020122_world-communications-day.html).

<sup>17</sup> Heidi A Campbell, ‘Community’, in H.A. Campbell (ed.), *Digital religion: Understanding religious practice in new media worlds*, 3–67, (Routledge: Abingdon, 2013),3

<sup>18</sup> Heidi A Campbell, ‘Community’, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Aline Amaro da Silva , *The Diverse Ways of Being Church in the Digital Society and in Times of Pandemic*, in *Digital Ecclesiology: A Global Conversation*, Edited by Heidi A Campbell, (Tx: Digital Religion Publications, 2020): 7. [www.digitalreligion.tamu.edu](http://www.digitalreligion.tamu.edu), Retrieved 26 May 2021

church as a substitute for regular church. The vast majority of believers, even where internet is accessible, reliable, and fast, still wanted to meet in person”.<sup>20</sup> While it is important to recognise the significance of physical gathering to worship, the pandemic has forced us to rethink how we gather. Suddenly we are recognising that with all the challenges we may encounter yet the church must gather. “The church building can be closed, but churches (people of God) can still be alive and active”.<sup>21</sup> Digital worship provides an opportunity for Christians to be exposed to other forms of worship, liturgical practices and preaching than they are usually accustomed to. For some, the experience leads to a deeper appreciation of their church tradition and worship practices and for others, it may have opened up a totally new world of worship experience altogether.<sup>22</sup> Media and internet has strengthened the possibilities of spreading the Gospel on a broader scale and reaching all categories of people, Christians, non-Christians and those of other faiths. It gives the opportunity to be part of more church communities in one day than people fifty years ago could in lifetime.<sup>23</sup> The pandemic experience draws us into a more appropriate understanding of Christian mission with the focus not being on the Church but on the reign of God. It has helped to see the state of the world rather than to focus on the inside of the church. Even though Medias may not be the most ideal way to build community, yet it is possible. Online has helped to build relational communities, which traditional ecclesiology has prevented us from considering. If the church is intentional of building relational communities with a much wider group of people and not limited to those who physically attend church, than church should integrate digital media as an integral part of its field of mission and evangelization. If it emphasises the formation of Christian community, social media will be an increasingly important contributor to the nurturing of communal connections. Proclamation of the Word will always be central to the church’s calling, and new media will join older media as

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<sup>20</sup> The vast majority of believers, even where internet is accessible, reliable, and fast, still wanted to meet in person

<sup>21</sup> Jerry, Pillay, COVID-19 Shows the Need to Make Church More Flexible. *Transformation* Vol. 37(4) (2020), 268 <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265378820963156>

<sup>22</sup> Jerry, Pillay, “COVID-19 Shows the Need to Make Church”, 268

<sup>23</sup> Justin Wise, *The social Church a theology of digital communication*. (Moody publishers. Chicago 2014):99

vehicles for the announcing of the good news.<sup>24</sup> Digital technology is impossible to avoid, it has become almost a requirement for churches to perform the most basic organizational and community structured tasks today.

In Jesus encounter with the Samaritan women, He told the woman that, it will be neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem that they will worship the Father. “God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). What this biblical passage reveals to us is that the main temple in which we are to worship God is our own body. We do not do it alone, but as part of the Connected Body of Christ. We realize that there are several ways to pray; in our home, over the internet, connected with the People of God, and that God’s grace exceeds the space-time limit. However place of worship remains important in God’s eyes. If God commanded the Israelites to build a tent for worship, a place where he would meet with them; this suggests that place of worship mattered.<sup>25</sup> While God expects His people to meet with Him at the place of worship, that place is not restricted to only one location. That is why the bible says, “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matt.18:20). Therefore, if God consciousness is everywhere, it means that, His people can maintain a continued awareness of His presence at all times in all places. If God’s presence is released from the “church” as a place to the church as people, then His presence can be everywhere.<sup>26</sup> The church online is taking the gospel to where the people are. It is creating opportunity to reach more people. Knowing that technology is not entirely neutral, the challenge is how to keep God at the center of worship. The resistance of some toward adopting new technology in worship is that it has the potential to become the object (idol) of worship, rather than a means of drawing closer to God.<sup>27</sup> As Campbel agrees, the process of engagement should be with serious reflection. Campbel highlights the fact that digital media are indeed a double-edge sword, simultaneously offering both opportunities and challenges. New technologies offer advantages such as streamlining church communicative practices and providing members easier access to church information and

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<sup>24</sup> Jim Rice, Does our “digitology”, 4

<sup>25</sup> John Inge, A Christian theology of place. (New York: Routledge 2016)

<sup>26</sup> church as people, then His presence can be

<sup>27</sup> Bala A. Musa, “Reimagining Place and Presence in the Virtual Church:”, 57

teachings. But these advantages must be weighed against the potential for social media to make private church conversations public, potentially exposing church structures and leadership to public scrutiny in new ways. Indeed, several of these studies show how the integration of digital media in church work can lead to the loss of a unified voice and the ability to manage divisiveness within the church. The benefits of worshipping at a distance will more be seen when God is kept at the center.<sup>28</sup>

## **V. DIGITAL ECCLESIOLOGY: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES**

The temptation to completely digitize church is now a greater threat than ever before. It does not seem that the Church can continue to exist in any meaningful capacity if it shifts online, it should remain first, a physical gathering of believers. While media has generated the possibility of making the church accessible to many more, unfortunately, it has also restricted the church to only those who can access the electronic platform. Referring to my context of Republic of Congo (DRC), similar to many around the world, the majority of church members live in extreme poverty. It will not be exaggerating if one says that about 90% of our church members cannot afford to own a smartphone or a television, so can they afford to get internet connection or TV subscription. There is no electricity and network coverage in some area. When church closed, the only way some matured Christian's families could worship was through small gathering in their homes under the Holy Spirit guidance. The above context, inevitably excludes the majority of poor people who cannot afford to connect on the Internet. Therefore, "Churches have to consider how they may be 'present' in places where it matters the most".<sup>29</sup> Poverty challenge also affects the church as they do not have any access to innovative technologies. Since churches survival depends on offerings, it affects pastors and all paid churches workers. In such a context, the use of Medias for any extent remains a challenge.

Digital ecclesiology presents a challenge on how the church can continue with its mission and ministry among the poor and the suffering. The pandemic experience has shown the gap between the rich and the poor. Should we continue to widen it further?

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<sup>28</sup> Heidi A Campbell, 'Community', 3

<sup>29</sup> Jerry, Pillay, "COVID-19 Shows the Need to Make Church", 269

According to Pillay; “the church affirms its integrity and faithfulness to the Gospel when it takes up the struggles and sufferings of the world, when it favours the poor, and when it joins with God in turning to the world to establish justice, peace and the fullness of life for all people and creation”.<sup>30</sup> Bosch reminds us that mission is God’s ‘yes’ to the world submitted in the conviction that there is continuity between the reign of God, the mission of the church, and justice, peace, and wholeness in society, and that salvation also has to do with what happens to people in this world.<sup>31</sup> Relationships in online communities could be viewed as purely instrumental because people engage mainly for what they can get out of it and not primarily to share responsibility for each other, which is in sharp contrast to why and how offline communities are formed. The individualised and self-serving nature of online communities could be viewed as in sharp contrast with the nature of the church as community that is in service of the world and does not exist for itself.<sup>32</sup> If the church is a servant to the marginalized and an advocate for justice, the church will use its digital presence as a way to fulfill those missions.

Online or celebration through other Medias should not be considered as watching a movie or listening to news while busy with other activities and not. How many times in physical worships did we think that people are using their smart phone to read the Bible while they were chatting or being distracted by adverts that pop up? Staying at home can bring us great opportunities to reconnect with the family and with ourselves through silence, introspection and sharing but, it must engage our entire being. Because, badly lived, it can disorient us from our real objectives. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare and schedule the time to meet to celebrate and live spiritual communion without any distraction. Digital ecclesiology according to Rice, “would present a challenge of navigating between three communities—the real physical community, the family community, and the virtual community”.<sup>33</sup> It

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<sup>30</sup> Jerry, Pillay, “COVID-19 Shows the Need to Make Church”, 270

<sup>31</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. (New York: Orbis Books 1991):11

<sup>32</sup> Heidi A Campbell, ‘Community’, 6.

<sup>33</sup> Jim Rice, Does our “digiology” match our ecclesiology? (2012), 1. <http://cpx.cts.edu/newmedia/blog/new-mediaproject/2012/05/11/does-our-digitology-match-ourecclesiology> Retrieved 28 may 2021

is also difficult to distinguish between the private and the public.<sup>34</sup> Pope Francis warned that “faith via media consumption is not the Church, because it is without the Eucharist, without the people of God assembled together, and without the sacraments, describing the trend as dangerous, detached from the people of God”.<sup>35</sup> In these emergency times of digital participation in Eucharistic celebrations, we are compelled to rethink the physicality of liturgical and sacramental actions. This does not mean that spiritual communion through digital means replaces physical communion in person.

While the digital age proves the power and the possibility of neighborliness, it has yet to be able to fulfill the relationship paradigm that Jesus put forth. The story tells us that the Samaritan who was full of compassion to a man he saw abandoned on the street. He “saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him (Luke 10:33-34). Thus, being neighborly is much more than sending out money. Being neighborly for Jesus means that we recognize someone’s presence and see his/her pains, suffering, and feeling compassion towards others. Moreover, it requires a physical dimension, which in the parable, is demonstrated by different actions verbs, going, bandaging the wound, pouring oil and wine, lifting up onto the donkey, and taking to the inn. These concrete, up-close and personal actions imply that real relationships require the aspect of embodiment to convey the true sense of neighborliness. There is a calling for the church to become a body of believers who physically bear one another’s burdens, lay hands on the sick, reach out and minister to the world. The digital age may help us to see farther and wider, and it may motivate us to open our wallet to support a particular charity, but if we are unable to embrace the dying or wipe the tears of a person who has lost her home to natural disaster, then we must reflect on how to live in this digital age so as to truly be neighbors of one another with human contact at every level of our lives.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Roland Chia, via modem: Religion in the digital age. Paper presented at a workshop on digital theology, Ethos Institute, Durham University, Durham, UK. 2019 [https://ethosinstitute.sg/viamodem/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=via-modem](https://ethosinstitute.sg/viamodem/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=via-modem). Retrieved 28 May 2021

<sup>35</sup> Catholic News Service. Pope warns of danger in online masses.2020 .[www.catholicweekly.com.au/pope-warns-of-dangerin-online-masses/](http://www.catholicweekly.com.au/pope-warns-of-dangerin-online-masses/). Retrieved 24 May 2020

<sup>36</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, “Message for World Communication Day 2011,” [https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-ii/en/messages/communications/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20110124\\_45th-world-](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-ii/en/messages/communications/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20110124_45th-world-)

Digital technology plays a key role in the church, but COVID-19 has shown us that being the church online requires more than simply streaming a worship service. When churches become selfish to their congregation and communities in exchange for virtual worship services, they are missing a key element of their biblical calling and a great opportunity. Offering content for individuals to consume is helpful, but it cannot replace fellowship, conversations after services, small group meetings and personal connections that only physical gathering sustains.

## **VI. A MODEL OF GLOBAL DIGITAL CHURCH**

Theologically, what we now refer to as ecclesiology was based on a socialization that was family based and stratified in terms of roles and functions. The power of a church online goes beyond a simple social media like Facebook, Whatsapp, YouTube and so on. It is not a power of technology but the power that comes from human being connecting from all around the globe.<sup>37</sup> Now, a single message could reach thousands, even millions, of people all over the world simultaneously, which helped to create a popular, or mass culture. The explosion of digital media goes beyond time and space. The pandemic has reaffirmed that the church does not live within walls it is the people of God who, in the power of the Holy Spirit, live and long for God's reign in the world. The church is a sign, symbol and pointer to that kingdom as it is called out of the world and sent into the world to be the presence of God.

It is time to realize that, the church has changed tremendously, and church will not be the same again. Being church is no longer reduced to a building, but to people coming together in prayer and living their faith. Doing things differently also makes one see what is essential. God has ordained the church in such a way that its members are profoundly dependent on one another. They are to encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11), pray for each other (Ephesians 6:18), and carry the burdens of their brothers and sisters in the Lord (Galatians 6:2). Most crucially, Christians must speak the word of God to one another. Christians need another Christian to speak God's word to him; he needs his brother as a

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communications-day.html. Retrieved 11 May 2021

<sup>37</sup> Justin Wise, "The social Church a theology of digital communication",<sup>32</sup>

bearer and proclaimer of the divine word of salvation.<sup>38</sup> Taking the example of Apostle Paul, we see that the Apostle used the media of his days, letters to exhort, instruct, rebuke and encourage the churches in different cities while he was in prison. “Paul knew that distance and separation could not threaten the deep koinonia he had with these churches, and that his letters could and would-by God’s grace-have an impact on their recipients.”<sup>39</sup> We can also trust God to do the same today through technology. Paul’s letters allowed him to be present in multiple places at once. He was present by clear instructions he gave that led others to allow the Holy Spirit to produce fruit in their lives. Paul’s letters were a kind of technology providing his presence and extending his messages where he could not be physically.<sup>40</sup> Paul letters only served as a mode of communicating. Still, Christians continued to have physical gathering.

The church should maintain physical gathering as much as possible while it continues to use technology, online religious activities and networks. Online should not be seen only as supplementing the church’s offline activities, an alternative or a substitute, it should be considered as an integral part of the church. Like Apostle Paul says, Christians must yearn to see each other again in the flesh (Romans 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:4). This is because in creating us as embodied beings, God has made the physical presence and interaction of its members an important aspect of the community of faith. As Bonhoeffer has perceptively put it,

Man was created a body, the Son of God appeared on earth in the body, he was raised in the body, in the sacrament the believer receives the Lord Christ in the body, and the resurrection of the dead will bring about the perfected fellowship of God’s spiritual-physical creatures. The believer therefore lauds the Creator, the Redeemer, God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for the bodily presence of a brother.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life together: The classic exploration of Christian community*. (New York: Harper Collins 1954): 23.

<sup>39</sup> Roland Chia, *Life Together, Apart: An Ecclesiology for a Time of Pandemic in the Digital Era*. In *Digital Ecclesiology: A Global Conversation*, Edited by Heidi A Campbell, (Tx: Digital Religion Publications, 2020): 25. [www.digitalreligion.tamu.edu](http://www.digitalreligion.tamu.edu), Retrieved 26 May 2021

<sup>40</sup> Justin Wise, *The social Church a theology of digital communication*, 111

<sup>41</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Life together: The classic exploration of Christian community”, 19–20



The purpose of having a place of worship is to bring the people together. God could have chosen to relate with everyone individually. He instead chose to live among His people. Worship is expected to be both individual and also collective. Collective worship is important for us as was to the early believers. The bible says that “they were all together in one place” (Acts 2:1b). In the book of Hebrews we also find a recommendation to believers to “not give up meeting together” (Hebrew 10:25a). Digital technology should serve as pastoral support for communication and ministry work, a tool providing new outreach opportunities that connect online-offline spaces. The two should work in complementarity.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

To put digital church back on the shelf in the new normal is to ignore the greatest opportunity the church has today to reach people. And it also ignores the fact that many will want digital to be at least an optional if not a preferred method of engagement where geography and other barriers prevent access. Churches seeking to move towards a digital ecclesiology should focus not simply on how technology should be used in the church environment, but also on why and for what purpose they should choose to engage digital media. Theological reflection should be at the heart of this strategic reflection. Moving towards a digital ecclesiology should be approached as a process of thoughtful, faith-based reflection and communal conversations that consider both the historic and emergent social and ecclesiological implications of digital media integration for a church in a digital age.<sup>42</sup> Campbell concludes that online and offline communities should rather be viewed as complementary and an extension of each other rather than being in competition or mutually excluding. In other words, it could be argued that if offline communities are seen as real, online communities could not be viewed differently. There is a need for churches to recognize the necessity to communicate appropriately in a digital world and should provide the resources required for skills training. The challenge and opportunities afforded by the advent of social media need to be addressed by men and women who see things differently.

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<sup>42</sup> Heidi A Campbell, ‘Community’, 10.

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# **GLOBAL LEARNING AS ECUMENICAL PRAXIS**

**No more “We here and they there!”**

*Rev. Lusungu Mbilinyi, Rev. Angelika Vedeler,  
and Rev. Dr. Andar Parlindungan*

## **SUMMARY**

The current divisions in society in Germany and worldwide indicate that a new global and local praxis of living together is needed. The UEM and its member churches have experiences gained in the long history of joint living and learning across borders. UEM’s current educational concept and, more than that, basic philosophy, grown out of this history, is called “Global Learning as Ecumenical Praxis” (GLEP). It is characterized by worshipping, learning and working jointly. This article, written by members of the international UEM staff, describes guiding ideas of this concept and elements of its practical application in the field of education.

## **I. GLOBAL LEARNING IN 2021**

“Global learning” is a collective term for the educational goal to raise awareness on the global differences and injustices and the mutual dependency and interrelatedness. Learners should acquire competencies with which they can shape and change global interrelationships. Different educational concepts pursue this goal with different emphases. Based on the UN’s “Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs)”<sup>1</sup>, the “Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)”<sup>2</sup>, for example, pursues the goal of sustainable development, and “Global Citizenship Education (GCED)”<sup>3</sup> the idea of a right to “global citizenship” to which every human being is entitled. In Germany, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) issued an “Orientation Framework for Global Development Education”<sup>4</sup> in 2015, which anchors globally oriented perspectives in all subjects and levels of school education and adult education.

## II. GLOBAL LEARNING IN UEM

From the beginning of its existence, global learning has been a central concern in the “United Evangelical Mission” (UEM)<sup>5</sup>. In its constitution of 1996, UEM describes itself as a “worshipping, learning and serving community”. Learning in the UEM is shaped by UEM’s international and participative structure. Emerged from the former “Rhenish Mission” and the former “Bethel Mission” (founded in 1886 and 1828), the former mission society “VEM” was transformed 25 years ago into the “United Evangelical Mission,” a communion of 38 churches of equal status in Africa, Asia and Europe and the “von Bodelschwingh Foundations Bethel”. The leadership and all decision making processes, working methods, staff composition and management structure of this communion are designed to be consistently equal and participatory.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>, (11. 04. 2021)

<sup>2</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-sustainable-development> (11. 04. 2021)

<sup>3</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/themes/gced> (11.04. 2021)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/veroeffentlichungen\\_beschluesse/2015/2015\\_06\\_00-Orientierungsrahmen-Globale-Entwicklung.pdf](https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/veroeffentlichungen_beschluesse/2015/2015_06_00-Orientierungsrahmen-Globale-Entwicklung.pdf) (11.04. 2021)

<sup>5</sup> <https://vemission.org>

<sup>6</sup> Churches and missions have experiences of living and learning together across borders. At the same time, they were not immune to participation in colonial dynamics in their history. Missionary education certainly contributed to the colonial superiority thinking of its time; indeed, it exaggerated it religiously and actively enabled its spread.

Missionary education, however, also differed from colonial precepts. Willem Simarmata, moderator of the UEM and bishop emeritus of the Indonesian Toba-Batak Church (HKBP), explains, “In our history, there were two kinds of global education. One was the colonial one. The colonial masters disregarded and destroyed everything that existed in terms of educational traditions. The school system they built was geared exclusively to their needs and goals. It provided elementary Western education and only as much as was needed for colonial purposes and to attract local labor. A different kind of education was established in some mission stations.

### III. THE AMBIVALENCE OF THE TERM “GLOBAL”

Discussions on education and learning of the last two years in the UEM showed that the term “global” is not uncontroversial internationally, and that the term “global learning” is equally evaluated controversially. The term “global” can contain reverence and joint responsibility for all life on earth, but also hegemonic thinking. For many, the term “global learning” is closely linked to the history of colonial education. It echoes the experience that local learning traditions and forms of education were so permanently devalued and destroyed by colonialism that education is still Eurocentric almost everywhere in the world.

At the same time, however, current developments indicate that global thinking and global learning are urgently needed today, in times of the corona pandemic and the worldwide threat to the earth’s natural resources. The vulnerability of the earth and the “intrinsic interdependence”<sup>7</sup> of all regions require commonality. Joybrato Mukherjee, President of the DAAD, therefore emphasizes in May 2020, at the beginning of the Corona crisis: “We know (...) that the world after Corona will be - and must become - a different one.

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Not all, but some of the missionaries, such as Ludwig Inger Nommensen in Sumatra, treated the people with whom they lived with respect. They listened to them, respected local traditions and promoted indigenous languages in their schools, even against the wishes of the colonial government. The education they transmitted was predominantly one of appreciation.” (Opening address to the UEM international “Think Tank on Global Learning in Ecumenical Perspective” in Pematangsiantar/Indonesia, September 2019)

In his speech at the WCC Assembly in Harare in 1998, Nelson Mandela also described the educational work of the missions: “As we were coming here, I told President Mugabe that he is a younger man than myself, and I said perhaps the experiences I have had he did not have during his time. But I said my generation is the product of church education. Without the missionaries and other religious organizations I would not have been here today. The government of the day took no interest whatsoever in the education of Africans, Coloureds and Indians. The churches bought the land, built the schools, equipped them, appointed and employed people. Therefore when I say we are the product of missionary education, I recognize that I will never have sufficient words to thank the missionaries for what they did for us”. (Speech of the President of Republic Nelson Mandela to the World Council of Churches on the occasion of its 50th founding anniversary, Harare/Zimbabwe, 13, December 1998 <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/assembly/or-mand.html>, 08.01.2020)

<sup>7</sup> “The Covid-19 pandemic has laid bare the fact that we live together in a common economic, social and ecological home. Our response to this global health crisis (...) must recognize our intrinsic interdependence and hold together economic, social and ecological objectives.” In: For an economy of life in a time of pandemic. Joint message of the WCC, LWF, CWM and WCRC, May 2020. URL: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/calling-for-an-economy-of-life-in-a-time-of-pandemic-a-joint-message-from-the-wcc-wcrc-lwf-and-cwm/view> (30. 05. 2020)



(...) Major global challenges can only be met through cooperation across borders and continents“<sup>8</sup>

#### **IV. PARTICIPATIVE GLOBALITY: NO “WE HERE AND THEY THERE”**

Churches are in demand in this situation. They have an understanding of globality and experiences: Internationality and diversity are inherent in Christianity and in other religions.<sup>9</sup> The question must be asked how their understanding and praxis of ecumene can contribute to the urgently required “cooperation across borders and continents” (see above), and how their long experience of living and learning together across borders can be fruitful for the present situation.

In the past four years, there has been a reflection process in the UEM, initiated by its international Council<sup>10</sup>. 25 years after the transformation of the UEM from a German mission organization into the international communion of churches in Africa, Asia and Europe, the question was asked which special forms of internationally joint learning have emerged in the UEM. It became clear that global learning in the UEM is much more than an educational concept, it is an everyday praxis in all areas of work. Globality determines every project, all management structures, the decision-making processes, the composition of the staff or the fundraising - everything is shaped jointly, internationally. The UEM therefore no longer refers to global learning as its educational approach, but more comprehensively, as its attitude and praxis. It does not understand globalism as a particular aspect of reality, but sees “the unity of the world as a condition (...), as a frame of reference to understand, interpret and shape the world”.<sup>11</sup> Education in the UEM therefore does aim at preparing learners for globality or at enabling them to react meaningfully to it, but implements it practically and reflects it.

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<sup>8</sup> Joybrato Mukherjee: Lernt planetares Denken! In: “Die Zeit“ (weekly newspaper), edition 23/2020, 28. 05. 2020

<sup>9</sup> Miroslav Volf describes churches and religions neither as opponents, nor merely as part of “the dynamics of globalization”, but “in some ways even (as) the original globalizers and (...) drivers of globalization processes.” in: Volf, Miroslav: Zusammen wachsen: Globalisierung braucht Religion, Gütersloh 2017, p. 17

<sup>10</sup> The Council is the highest governing body of the UEM after the General Assembly and consists of four representatives from each of the regions Africa, Asia and Europe.

<sup>11</sup> **Globalität: Die Einheit der Welt als Zustand.** Press release of the University Bonn, 05.04.2017. URL: <https://www.uni-bonn.de/neues/092-2017> (23. 12. 2019)

Education in the UEM is not deficit-oriented, but resource-oriented. It combines two movements: that of inclusion (“Nothing about us without us”), and that of ecumenism (“The whole earth is the Lord’s, and all who dwell on it”). Such global learning sees its concern not primarily in the WHAT, but more in the HOW of ecumene. It does not focus mainly on curricula, but on the organization and methods of education. Its goal is to learn, to work, to make music, to celebrate worship, to shape administration, to train co-workers, to exercise leadership responsibility together in diversity locally and worldwide.

The design of all educational programs in the UEM follows this basic understanding: They are organized and carried out together internationally. Diversity and participation determine every step of their planning. Any dichotomies of “we here” and “they there” are avoided. Learning together is their goal, not learning from, with or about each other.

## **V. GLOBALITY AS A PRAXIS OF EDUCATION**

This principle of UEM is called “Global Learning as Ecumenical Praxis (GLEP)”. It can be applied to any educational purpose, any topic and any target group.

What is decisive here are the practical steps, which take shape in the UEM in this way:

### **1. Create a diverse environment**

Any learning program must reflect und mirror heterogeneity from the beginning on and must be planned from the beginning on jointly, across existing borders, whatever they are.

### **2. Identify topics together**

Topics for educational programs are identified jointly, by different groups and players.

*In the UEM, this is done in a detailed annual process in which all members contribute their topics relevant for learning through the three UEM regional offices. Common topics are identified during the annual planning week.<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>12</sup> Topics for educational programs in 2021 include, e.g., eco-feminism, fundraising in parishes, organic farming, int. church music, overcoming racism and discrimination, pastoral care in times of Covid-19.

### **3. Compose diverse leadership teams**

GLEP programs are led by a team composed of representatives of the participating groups or several international churches. The leadership team must be diverse in composition.

*Cooperation contracts and agreements may need to be developed here. In the “Hamburg Model” of interreligious religious education for schools, for example, the city of Hamburg concluded formal cooperation agreements with the participating Muslim, Jewish and Hindu communities. Only in this way was responsibility shared and cooperation achieved “at eye level”.*

### **4. Set goals together**

GLEP ensures that objectives are developed jointly, by the supporting groups of a program, but also by the participants. The GLEP principles do not set own learning objectives in advance.

*In the UEM, all carriers of a program are therefore asked by the “leadership team” about their goals. In a participatory process, common goals are developed by all carriers.*

### **5. Communicate about boundaries**

The various groups that carry GLEP programs must agree on accepted values and attitudes, as well as on their limits of acceptance. If these are not clarified in advance, conflicts can arise during the learning process.

GLEP respects differences and uses them in learning processes. However, concerns and needs of particular regions or groups exist, which can be treated only among themselves or in safe spaces. This must be respected. In GLEP, where necessary, such “safe spaces” or programs restricted to certain participants only must be allowed to ensure that all voices have the room they need for expressing their situation.

*In the East Java Interfaith Cooperation program, it is a requirement that all participants need a recommendation from their imam or pastor to ensure that they can reflect on their own faith and are aware of their own openness and boundaries with regard to other faiths.*

## **6. Plan together**

The contents and structures of a learning program are developed by the leadership team together with experts and resource persons.

*In the UEM, this means that for educational programs, internationally composed teams plan the program and its processes.*

## **7. Learn together**

Rather than targeting specific groups within a region for global learning programs, such as Indonesian students or German pastors, GLEP ensures that learning groups are diverse and international in composition.

*Current learning groups in the UEM, e.g.: Young adults in church congregations, meetings of treasurers from different member churches, a working group for the development of international liturgies and worship formats, ecological farmers from different countries, workers in international diaconia, grandmothers from different religions.*

## **8. Teach together**

Resource persons, experts on the particular topic, teachers or trainers should come from different regions, disciplines, professions, etc. It is important that the teaching teams consist of experts who are willing to teach together and cooperate.

*Lecturers in the second section of the MA "Diaconal Management" are:*

*A senior manager and deputy director of an international church organization, a professor of administration, lecturers in Old and New Testament and Systematic Theology, a professor of economics, a director of a large hospital, women and men from different countries.*

## **9. Manage together**

Traditional roles of education change in GLEP: leaders of educational programs coordinate and accompany learning processes. They are organizers and moderate and facilitate

learning processes; as a rule, they are not themselves teachers. Since diversity is seen as a basic requirement and norm, the facilitators promote and accompany it, but do not act as “intercultural specialists and role models” or “supervisors” for diversity.

*The facilitation team of the international “Summer School on Human Rights and Conflict Transformation” consists of a UEM staff member with expertise in interreligious cooperation, a theologian and peace worker from Sri Lanka and an expert in conflict mediation from Germany.*

## **10. Find methods and places that encourage many perspectives**

Methods are chosen that give room for many perspectives. They support attitudes of appreciation, curiosity and interaction. Learning locations are chosen that allow for different perspectives on the topic.

*Learning is not limited to classrooms, but can take place, for example, in a field, a marketplace, a shopping mall, a soup kitchen, a hospital, a church, a diaconal center, or a bank. Electronic learning is an important medium for sharing local realities.*

## **11. Perceive and transform conflicts**

Contradictions and conflicts can arise in GLEP due to the many perspectives, which cannot always be resolved. Controversial issues exist. GLEP relies on the long experience of conflict transformation in the UEM through personal encounter, by trusting in long-term processes or by providing safe spaces for exchange and orientation. However, doing GLEP must not lead to a false harmony in which controversial issues are not voiced so as not to damage the community. Confidence in negotiation skills and in the ability to endure differences and continue communication are necessary and must be encouraged.

*In the UEM, there are traditions that enable members to live with differences and continue to seek guidance, as can be seen in the ongoing discussions about misleading theologies or about Pentecostal movements in the churches.*

## **VI. LIMITS OF COMMONALITY**

Collaborative learning can only develop in an environment of freedom and security. GLEP does not pursue a superficial “multiculti” exchange or reciprocity at any price. Existing power structures and situations of violence, in overt or covert form, must be perceived and critically reflected. People and communities affected by violence, racism or discrimination, or who have experienced situations of war or genocide, can only determine for themselves whether and under what conditions they are willing to communicate and learn together with others. This must be respected. Separate spaces must be possible where they are needed, they are a part of GLEP, not a contradiction.

GLEP can raise critical questions and can lead to conflict. Nevertheless, critical thinking and analysis must be part of any GLEP program and encouraged through its curriculum. At the same time, the experience gained in the VEM on mediation and conflict transformation - e.g. through the creation of safe spaces - can be used to promote a continuation of learning processes beyond conflict.

With its strong emphasis on relationships, GLEP can also be perceived as a new kind of exclusivity or “superiority.” Critical questions are then raised about whether only people with a certain level of education, with Internet access, in stable health, and with good language skills can participate in GLEP programs. GLEP programs must ensure full participation of people with widely varying abilities and competencies. For example, non-verbal methods must be included or communication beyond language skills must be made possible.

## **VII. DISTANCE AND PROXIMITY IN GLEP**

GLEP is based on relationships and creates relationships. Learning in GLEP programs is always existential learning and involves the whole person. It is not possible to participate “neutrally” in a GLEP educational program, without entering into the diverse community of learners. The emergence of personal and working relationships across boundaries is a central dimension of the GLEP approach. This has been reflected in feedback from participants in UEM

international education programs, most of whom described their experiences with the following statements<sup>13</sup>:

*“A lot of it was totally surprising in a way I never expected. I know I can’t always understand everything right away.”*  
*“I see my place in the world differently now. I’m connected.”*  
*“I’ve gotten ideas that I’m implementing in my work that we wouldn’t have thought of here locally.”*  
*“I now have a family whose members live in different places around the world.”*  
*“I have colleagues in other places in the world that I turn to when I have a problem in my work. We consult with each other.”*

Several international “communities of practice” have developed in the UEM in recent years, founded by graduates of international training programs or courses of study. They communicate electronically, and some meet physically on a regular basis, e.g. the alumni networks of former VEM scholarship holders or of the Int. Diaconia Management degree program.

However, there can be a danger that the relationships that develop in GLEP programs turn the participants into self-contained communities. GLEP therefore deliberately encourages collaboration with other churches and religions, with experts in science and practice, with other faith communities, and with non-governmental organizations and political actors.

At the same time, it remains important to respect different identities. GLEP does not aim at uniformity, but at bringing together different identities and concerns. Belonging to a community must not lead to a false harmony in which controversial issues are not discussed. Confidence in negotiation skills and in the ability to endure differences and continue communication are necessary and must be fostered.

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<sup>13</sup> Five group interviews with graduates were conducted in 2017–2020.

## **VIII. EXISTING GLEP PROGRAMS AND FURTHER PERSPECTIVES**

Each year, the UEM hosts more than 100 “Joint Programs”, which are developed in planning processes according to GLEP. The programs are organized either online or in presence. Participation is possible, information can be found at <https://www.vemission.org/weiterbilden/seminare/konferenzen.html>

In 2022, a publication will be published that describes and highlights the GLEP concept and its practice from different international perspectives.

Training on planning and organizing GLEP programs will be provided by the UEM, information on which is available at [region-deutschland@vemission.org](mailto:region-deutschland@vemission.org)

Global learning as ecumenical practice realizes new forms of living and learning together. It does not teach globalism, but lives it. This paradigm shift affects all areas of learning and cooperation. Therefore, further reflections will be made in the UEM: On internationally collaborative study and research, on joint historical work, on jointly designed worship services or on internationally joint art and theater productions.

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