



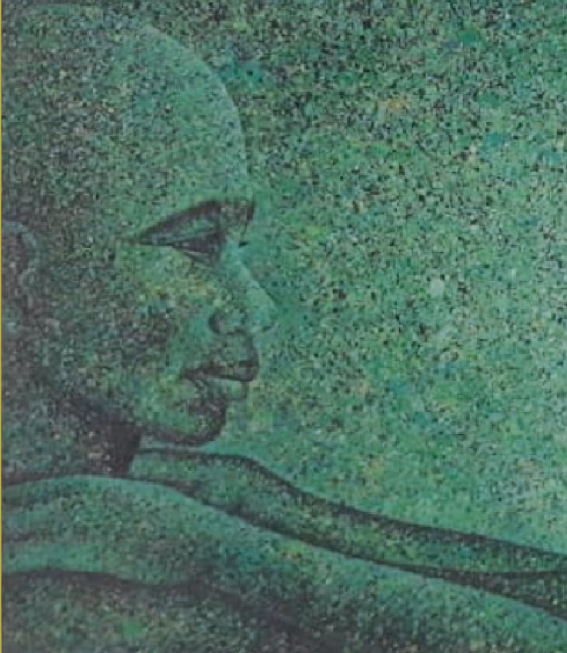
Mission Sparks

Academic Journal of Asia Region

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11th Edition

"SPIRIT OF GLOBAL LEARNING
IN ECUMENICAL PERSPECTIVE
FOR ACTING TOGETHER
TO OVERCOME GLOBAL CRISIS"





Mission Sparks

Academic Journal of Asia Region

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Jl. Pdt. J. Wismar Saragih, Bane, Kec. Siantar Utara,
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Phone: +62 622 7357681

AsiaRegional@vemission.org / www.vemission.org

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AN EDITORIAL NOTE

Global Learning in Ecumenical Perspective (GLEP) is an important theme which in the past four years has been discussed in the UEM. The UEM tasked 3 members of its staff Lusungu Mbilinyi, Angelika Veddeler and Andar Parlindungan to develop advanced concept about GLEP. In fact the global learning is not a new concept for UEM. From the beginning of UEM existence, global learning has been its central concern. UEM describes itself as a “worshipping, learning and serving community“ in its constitution of 1996.

UEM emphasizes the urgent need for global thinking and global learning today, also in times of the corona pandemic and the worldwide threat to the earth’s natural resources, which should be understood in the ecumenical perspective. It means on the basis of shared faith, to all denominations and doctrine represented in UEM and in dialog and diapraxis with other denominations and religions. GLEP for UEM is not only educational concept but basic philosophy.¹

In regards to GLEP, 11th Edition of Mission Spark has a theme: “Acting Together under Spirit of GLEP to overcome Radicalism, Environmental Crisis and Global Pandemic.” In the framework of GLEP some important topics are represented in this edition.

On the theme of Partnership, **Volker Martin Dally**, UEM General Secretary, shared compilation of his speeches in the two international events on Partnership. First event was a virtual International UEM Meeting on Trilateral Partnerships which focused on development of ideas for topic oriented trilateral partnerships. The second was UEM International Partnership Seminar with the topic “Against Discrimination and Exclusion”. It aims to bring UEM

¹ more about GLEP: <https://www.vemission.org/en/information/global-learning-in-ecumenical-perspective-glep> or GLEP Paper in the Mission Spark 10th Edition.

Human Rights Campaign 2021 to a partnership level. In his paper he mentioned six theses for ecumenical relations in globality.

Jordan H. Pakpahan elaborated the theme of multidimensional poverty in North Sumatera. He emphasized the importance to awaken the concern of churches in North Sumatra to stand against corruption. He underlined that churches should not only focus on their internal institutional matters and maintaining good relations with the government, but also actively combat corruption and build justice.

On the theme of environment crisis, **Marko Mahin** demonstrated the best practices to overcome the environmental crisis in Central Kalimantan. His article started with an explanation of what has been done and continued by examining and evaluating what has been done. He emphasized the need of the auto-criticism, continuous self-reflection and focus on community development.

Abraham Silo Wilar examined roots of religious radicalism. The examples which were taken are Hindu Nationalism, “Buddhist bin Laden”, and Christian Nationalism. Using the history and the spirituality discipline as methodology, he argued that religious radicalism has multiple layers and every single layer is a political post-truth over religion made up by unethical politicians.

In this 11th Edition we provide also a book review by Chlaodhius Budhianto which explored the book with title: “***Gereja Pasca Pandemi Merengkuh Kehidupan***” (engl.: Post-Pandemic Church Embraces Life) written by Joas Adiprasetya.

Enjoy reading!



Rev. Dr. Dyah Ayu Krismawati
Chief Editor, and Executive Secretary for Asia



LEARNING AND ACTING TOGETHER IN GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

By Volker Martin Dally

PREFACE

UEM conducted two international events on partnership that are close and relevant to the theme of the 11th Edition of Mission Sparks which is **Acting Together under Spirit of GLEP to overcome Radicalism, Environmental Crisis and Global Pandemic**.

First, a Virtual International UEM Meeting on Trilateral Partnerships on 9 June 2021. A focus of the meeting was the development of ideas for topic oriented trilateral partnerships. Participants of the seminar were partnership officers and representatives of the church leaders who have existing trilateral partnerships within UEM. There are three existing trilateral partnerships as following (a) HKBP District Humbang Habinsaran Indonesia, District Aachen Germany and Kaskazini A/ELCT-NWD Tanzania. (b). GKJTU Indonesia, District Lennep Germany and EAR Kigeme Rwanda. (c). GKI-TP, GKE and GBKP Indonesia.

Second, the UEM International Partnership Seminar with the topic "Against Discrimination and Exclusion" from 15 to 17 June, 2021. Through this digital seminar, UEM would like to bring this year's UEM Human Rights Campaign to a partnership level. The online seminar aims at developing a time-limited and topic-oriented partnership between experts of advocacy and educational institutions with a particular expertise on discrimination and exclusion issues in Africa, Asia and Germany. External experts from churches, non-governmental organizations and church organizations will present the most crucial issues regarding discrimination

and exclusion in Africa, Asia and Germany. Best practice examples of advocacy work shall be identified during the online seminar and an action plan for the establishment of a partnership between advocacy and educational institutions shall be developed.

I delivered opening speeches as keynote address to these events. This article compiles my speeches since the speeches are relevant with the theme of the 11th editions as a theological reflection on acting together in the form of partnership and GLEP. UEM states on partnership that “We understand ourselves as parts of the one body of Christ, therefore: We foster and support various forms of partnership relations among our members based on respect, mutuality and transparency. We facilitate exchange visits for staff, experts and volunteers. We create networks of partnership to open up and strengthen multilateral relations.”¹

What is GLEP? In brief, three members of the international UEM staff resume that “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.”²

BILATERAL RELATIONS OR INTERNATIONAL COMMUNION: SIX THESES FOR ECUMENICAL RELATIONS IN GLOBALITY.³

The following six theses plead for the development and expansion of multilateral international connections between churches, for example, in ecumenical or interreligious communities or networks. They argue strongly against regressions into bilateral connections.

¹ UEM corporate identity on pillar of partnership.

² Angelika Veddeler, Andar Parlindungan, Lusungu Mbilinyi on Global Learning as Ecumenical Praxis No more “We here and they there” 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.

³ Volker Martin Dally, Opening Speech on Virtual International UEM Meeting on Trilateral Partnerships on 9 June 2021.

1. A Different Worldview

“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;” (Ps. 24:1).

Churches, with their understanding of ecumenism as the whole inhabited earth, and through the long history of their worldwide relationships, profess inclusive and participatory forms of globality. It is their opportunity and responsibility to publicize and promote these. With their worldwide network of congregations, churches connect people - not just special professionals among them! - in all parts of the world. Such widely global connections are urgently needed today in the face of pandemic, global environmental degradation or populist regimes in all parts of the world, because they can foster new thinking in patterns of “globality” beyond old regional attributions. Bilateral relations, on the other hand, often produce one-sided classifications and allocations of certain world regions to categories such as “poor” and “rich,” “perpetrators” and “victims,” “powerful” and “powerless” etc. Such distorting systematics, stereotypes and valuations do not correspond to reality.

Instead, flexible, dynamic multilateral networks of relationships between churches and religions are needed.

2. The Dominance of the North

“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;” (Mt 2:6)

The churches of Europe, through their financial and administrative structure and their highly differentiated education, congregational structure and diaconia, are “tankers” - cumbersome but strong. Bilateralism in church relations can perpetuate Northern dominance. Many churches in the Global South are much smaller and not so fixed in their structure. However, they often have an enormous following, far more than churches in Europe, and they are crucial, often the most important, providers of health care and education in their countries. Their strengths often do not come to bear in bilateral relations and are not perceived or are perceived only in a stereotyped way (“lively church services there - financial strength here”). In conversations and relationships, the churches of the Global North almost always take dominant roles

and determine discourses and programs. (Ex: the discourse around homosexuality).

In international communities, the voices of the Global South are strengthened. They can engage more effectively and authentically in discourses and actively shape them. In ecumenical communities, issues from all regions are taken up. This can also lead to conflict, but brings greater honesty to relationships.

3. Global Joint Cooperation

“... to work it and take care of it.” (Gen. 2:15).

Thinking in terms of “us and them” values the different perspectives and thus limits the exchange and creativity of joint work. Multilateral cooperation, on the other hand, brings together very different perspectives. It always brings out surprising and irritating dimensions of a topic and its perception. Without such moments of irritation, global cooperation is not honest. The danger in bilateral relationships is that the diversity of perspectives does not become clear because discourses are always conducted with only one partner with whom the relationship is not to be disturbed.

In international communities, it becomes the norm to deal constructively with irritations. This promotes competencies that are urgently needed today and practice in every day global thinking and action.

4. Innovative Forms of Relationship

“But they had all things in common...” (Acts 2:44)

In many partnership relationships between church districts, it is visible that bilateral partners tend to lock each other into traditional roles of “giver” and “taker.” Such relationships have a tendency to become cumbersome and rigid. Finding new forms is of-ten tedious to impossible. People interested in new ways of cooperating are often not allowed inside traditional partnership relationships.

In communities, greater diversity results in new forms of relationships - e.g., networks, alliances, or thematically oriented collaborations for a specific time. They are better able to take up concrete occasions and developments, beyond immediate actions such as disaster relief.

5. Finances and Their Flow

“You give them something to eat.” (Lk 9:13).

Finances today flow not only from the North to the South, but also from the South to the South and from the South to the North. Churches in the North must be careful not to persist in old self-images of “givers” versus “takers” - they could be badly mistaken. Real flows of money that do not go from the North to the South are often not documented in current accounting systems and thus not made known. It is different in a community. Everyone is a giver and a taker, and new forms of documentation emerge for this.

6. Focal Points of Christianity

“For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the Lord’s people in Jerusalem.” (Rom 15:26).

Focal points of Christianity today are clearly in the Global South. Churches in the North have not yet adequately realized this. Looking at the projections of the 2019 “Freiburg Study,” it is clear that churches in the North could become dependent on churches in the South for their own existence in the near future. Realizing this could become a matter of survival for the churches of the North. It is important to develop already now new, innovative forms of ecumenical relationships that reflect the realities of life of churches in the North as well as in the South, in the East as well as in the West. Re-striking ourselves to bilateral North-South relations would be a step backward.

UEM MISSION TO STAND UP FOR EACH OTHER AND ACCORDINGLY TO OPPOSE ALL CURRENTS OF RACISM, DISCRIMINATION AND EXCLUSION FROM SOCIETY.⁴

These days I am reading autobiographical writings of a German who survived the Holocaust, Edgar Hilsenrath. He was born in

⁴ Volker Martin Dally opening speech on International Partnership Web Seminar - “Against Discrimination and Exclusion. UEM mission to stand up for each other and accordingly to oppose all currents of racism, discrimination and exclusion from society is in line with UEM corporate identity on Pillar of Advocacy. It states that we believe that human beings are created in the image of God and therefore have inalienable dignity and rights. Therefore, we promote and defend human rights. We support initiatives to solve conflict peacefully. We join efforts to achieve

Leipzig in 1926, later he lived with his family in Halle, where they had a furniture store. He was blond and blue-eyed, went to school there, he did everything boys did in school. His father had fought for Germany in World War I and had been decorated with medals.

Then came the Nazi seizure of power and everything changed. He was mistreated and beaten up at school, his parents' business was broken up, his mother and the two children escaped to Romania, but from there they were deported to Ukraine. The father first stayed in Germany to sell the belongings, including the business, and then fled to France.

Why did everything change? This typical German family was a Jewish one. Edgar Hilsenrath and his classmates did not even know that there should be differences. But the political and educational powers taught them, and at the very end of that teaching more than 6 million Jews were murdered by the German nation.

Edgar Hilsenrath now does not ask why the Germans did nothing against the murder. No, he asks why the Germans kept silent in the time before the killing, in the years 1933-1939. Why they even went along with everything. He asks why they did not protest against the injustice when it began; why they did not stand up for him and his family and the millions of other Jews, Gypsies, Communists, homosexuals, people who thought differently politically when they were beaten, mistreated and driven out of the villages and towns. Although all Germans knew this, saw it and with their silence finally approved it. They gave in to the slogans of the posters and the street and finally endorsed the sin of those inhuman words and deeds.

Edgar Hilsenrath did not become happy in exile. In 1975 he returned from America to Germany, the country of his language. And then he was again insulted and threatened, as in 1978 in Kamen at a public reading in which right-wing radicals insulted him and rattled with bicycle chains.

And today? Where do we stand when people are mistreated because of their skin color, their faith, their culture, their existence in general, with words, but also through deeds?

Will a future Edgar Hilsenrath ask us in 50 years: Why did you keep silent back then? Why did you do nothing? Why didn't you do anything to stop that talking?

As UEM, we are doing a lot today because we see it as our Christian mission to stand up for each other and accordingly to oppose all currents of racism, discrimination and exclusion from society. In this spirit of the power we have to resist I wish you all exciting discussions, imaginative ideas and God's blessing for the course of the seminar.



Rev. Volker Martin Dally is
General Secretary of United Evangelical
Mission The Communion of Churches
in Three Continents.



EXAMINING HINDU NATIONALISM, BUDDHIST BIN LADEN, AND CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM: HISTORICAL AND SPIRITUAL APPROACHES

Abraham Silo Wilar

ABSTRACT

This paper examines Roots of Religious Radicalism through academic lens. In examining it, the paper will start with three examples of Religious Radicalism, and assess the examples with an interdisciplinary methodology, to explore it academically. The examples which will be discussed are Hindu Nationalism, “Buddhist bin Laden”, and Christian Nationalism. This methodology is comprised of two disciplines of knowledge: first, the history discipline, and the spirituality discipline. Each will be used to examine its existence that is divided into two: historical aspect and spiritual aspect. In the approach its historical existence will be examined with historical approach. It helps trace factors of its presence. Secondly, the paper corporates spirituality approach to be able to unpack what is actually its spiritual aspect that lies inside it. By using the methodology, the paper argues that Religious Radicalism has multiple layers constructing its existence to appear and to evolve, and every single layer is a political post-truth over religion made up by unethical politicians for it lacks of substantial core of religions such as love, compassion and hospitality that promotes well-being of all existence.

Keywords: Nationalism, Radicalism, Religious, Multiple, Layers, History and Spiritual

INTRODUCTION

Examine a popular phenomenon such as religious radicalism has been an academic enterprise that is attractive to many scholars. In this sort of enterprise, majority scholars agree on the fact that it exists in many religions. It is not unique to Islam alone. For instance, while the world has for decades been accepting Buddhism as presenting a non-violence religion as contrast to the bloody construction of the three Abrahamic religions, such perception has already broken as a Buddhist monk named Ashin Wirathu came to public space with hatred towards Islam.¹

Looking at its presence in those countries, it seems to have suggested that a methodology to approach it in order to wholly understand it is that of important. And the present paper takes it seriously, and then would like to put it on emphasize throughout the paper. As mentioned earlier, the methodology of this paper is interdisciplinary. This methodology is comprised of two disciplines: history and spirituality. In the paper, these two disciplines are considered as approaches, so the history will be historical approach, and the spirituality will become spiritual approach. Combining these two approaches are deliberately intended for disclosing elements attached to the examples, and examining core of each example.

To operate the two approaches, the paper is inclined to refer to the history that is rooted in German scholarship. Within this sort of scholarship history is a science (*Wissenschaft*) from which certain phenomenon is explored and it comes up with explanations and insights of it. In field of Biblical Studies, it has been exercised by many scholars. For instance, John J. Collins, writing *The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age*,² deliberately shows its presence in his book. This paper however realizes huge criticisms addressed to this scholarship tradition.³ All criticisms are well noted but forsake of writing this paper, the criticisms are put

¹ Marella Oppenheim, "It only takes one terrorist": the Buddhist monk reviles Myanmar's Muslim." *The Guardian*, May 12, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/may/12/only-takes-one-terrorist-buddhist-monk-reviles-myanmar-muslims-rohingya-refugees-ashin-wirathu>. Accessed September 20, 2021.

² John J. Collins, *The Bible After Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age*. Michigan. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005.

³ Georg G. Iggers, "The Tragic Course of German Historiography: The Political Function of Historical Scholarship in Germany in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *German Life and Letters* 34, no 2 (December 2007): 223. DOI:10.1111/j.1468-0483.1981.tb00219.x Accessed on September 20, 2021.

aside for it deals with different direction of the scholarship that will put the paper on that direction.

Another approach that is also used in the paper is spiritual approach. Suppose the religious radicalism be a religious phenomenon in the flourishing of radicalism movement, it then needs to be examined its spiritual dimension. And the spiritual approach applied in the paper is to serve such purpose. In this paper, the approach is perceived as a specific way designed for incorporating religious values that are set up to become parameter to measure spiritual dimension of the phenomenon. One substantial and common ingredient composing of the spiritual approach is discernment.⁴ In field of spirituality it takes various practical ways and it has direction for the purpose of spiritual formation. For instance, doing contemplation or yoga as the discernment to have spiritual formation for those practicing it. So, within this approach the phenomenon will be discerned to get it examined its spiritual dimension.

With the proposed approaches, the present paper argues that the religious radicalism phenomenon is an abuse of religion for its historical inceptions carries religion for political purposes and spiritually speaking it contains no observation substantial to religious tenet that is common in many religions such as love, compassion and hospitality. So, it cannot be said as religious as much as religious practices of loving others, being compassionate to other that are practiced individually and communally in many religious communities.

To address the topic with proposed methodology, the present paper is structured into several four constructions. First, Introduction that will give a snapshot of the paper. Second, methodology to assess religious radicalism and second. Third, examine religious radicalism: historically and spiritually. It explores the topic with two approaches. Fourth, concluding remarks. It will highlight thesis of the paper and raise its expectation to have further engagement from other scholars.

⁴ Judy E. Lam, "Reading the Song of Songs through a spiritual direction lens," *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 71:1 (2015), 3 <http://www.scielo.org.za/pdf/hts/v71n1/41.pdf>. Accessed on September 20, 2021.

METHODOLOGY TO ASSES RELIGIOUS RADICALISM

Historical criticism in the title of Collin's book is so much related to the scholarship. And from his work we can get what does history mean as *wissenschaft*. From the book, he seems to have suggested the meaning of history as a discipline dealing with specific narratives from certain time and location in which individuals, communities, or societies, institutions and events are part of it. In dealing with those things, historical criticism is an explicit marker of history being a science: it must have curiosity to observe phenomenon to get knowledge of it. And it must be critical in observing it. Besides the work Collins, the present paper wants to add up another work as pertinent proof for bolding historical criticism position in the field of history. Joseph A. Fitzmyer S.J.'s piece entitled "*Historical Criticism: Its Role in Biblical Interpretation and Church Life*" is an example of how fruitful it is in the field of studying the Bible and of the church life.⁵

In this work, he lays out a short trajectory of its origin,⁶ describes its operating system,⁷ and explores its role in the church life and the Biblical Studies.⁸ His work is important to this paper because it gives clear trajectory of its origin and exposes its operating system. And from his work, the paper wants to employ rudimentary information about historical criticism described in the work to further describe about historical approach relevant to discuss religious radicalism. From the work, it discloses its origin as to study and analyze recorded narratives in a book called the Bible. Furthermore, it continues that it studies and analyzes the narratives with raising questions concerning authenticity, integrity, composition, content, purpose, and background of the narratives, and utilizing literary criticism, and philology to pursue those concerns.⁹

⁵ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., "Historical Criticism: Its Role in Biblical Interpretation and Church Life," 50 (1989), *Theological Studies*, <http://cdn.theologicalstudies.net/50/50.2/50.2.2.pdf>. Accessed on September 23, 2021.

⁶ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., "Historical Criticism: Its Role in Biblical Interpretation and Church Life," 245-249

⁷ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., "Historical Criticism: Its Role in Biblical Interpretation and Church Life," 249-255

⁸ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., "Historical Criticism: Its Role in Biblical Interpretation and Church Life," 255-259

⁹ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., "Historical Criticism: Its Role in Biblical Interpretation and Church Life,"

The historical approach applied in this paper shares the concerns in the writing of Fitzmyer. In this regard, the present paper, employing historical approach, addresses the background of religious radicalism to find its authenticity, content, and purpose of using religious in its name. It is the core concern of the present paper. And to pursue it, the paper will search in literatures dealing with the researched phenomenon.

Spirituality is a field of theology focusing on spiritual foundation, direction and formation. These three elements of spirituality are well explored by Philip Sheldrake. In his book, Sheldrake puts spirituality as an academic branch of theology and starts his exploration of it in Christianity world by looking at its spiritual foundation. The spiritual foundation of it is the Scripture and the Church.¹⁰ Of course, in Christianity, spirituality has to do with two main focuses: spiritual direction and formation. Nevertheless, spirituality has become a more universal subject to deal with. It is everywhere in many religions. In fact, it has been addressed in relation to other discipline such as psychology. For instance, James M. Nelson's book discusses it in relation to religion and spirituality.¹¹ In discussing it, Nelson intends to make a dialogue between religion and psychology, and his intention is divided into several interesting themes started from the definition of religion and psychology, and relation of science with religion, to psychology, religion and mental health,¹² and other themes. By discussing the relation between the two, authors of the present paper views that Nelson seems to have believed that religion and psychology can provide a help for building inner dimension of individuals, and therefore it helps develop larger community to have members who are mentally health as its effect.

Part of its evolvement, spirituality has been long taken into practices to exercise certain phenomenon. For instance, John R. Peteet's article entitled *A Closer Look at the Role of a Spiritual Approach in Addictions Treatment* has clearly incorporated spiritual approach¹³ In the article he describes how spiritual is defined and

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¹⁰ Philip Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007, 12-39.

¹¹ James M. Nelson, *Psychology, Religion and Spirituality*. Springer Verlag: New York, 2009.

¹² James M. Nelson, *Psychology, Religion and Spirituality*, 347-290.

¹³ John R. Peteet, "A Closer Look at the Role of a Spiritual Approach in Addictions Treatment," *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment* 10 (3), 1993.

divided into twelve steps program for the addicts. In the article he puts relationship between the people and the transcendent is basic issue of it from which the steps are coming out.¹⁴ With this example, the present argues the importance of the approach to closely examine the religious aspect of religious radicalism. It is possible to examine it through spiritual approach. By examining its religious aspect, the phenomenon of religious radicalism would be explored from within, to see what its aspect really means in it.

In examining it through spiritual lens, it will specifically take spirituality of each religion where religious radicalism flourishes from within, set up parameter to examine it, and apply it thoroughly. And parameter to set up is the core teachings of each religion and its specific constructions as understood in each community such as love, and hospitality. And it has certain constructions among the adherents. Each construction of love will be taken to measure religious aspect of religious radicalism.

In this paper love is taken as the parameter to examine religious radicalism. Being as the parameter, love is formulated into two rudimentary questions 1: how religious aspect of religious radicalism helps adherents of each religion observe love as taught in each religion; 2. how love has been thoroughly applied in public appearance of religious radicalism of each religion, as it publicly claims to be a religious presentation.

EXAMINE RELIGIOUS RADICALISM HISTORICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY

A. Hindu Nationalism

A.1. Historical Approach: Origin and Public Appearance

In this section authors of the paper will only describe each example briefly. In this brief description, it will only contain two points structuring the description: the origin dan public appearance.

Its origin cannot be detached from the establishment of *Bharatiya Jana Sangh* party (India's people party), a political party in India.¹⁵ This party will eventually be changed to

¹⁴ John R. Peteet, "A Closer Look at the Role of a Spiritual Approach in Addictions Treatment," 264.

¹⁵ Bruce Desmond Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics: The Origins and Development of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Bharatiya Janata Party (Hindu Nationalist Party) after its fusion with *Janata Dal* party (People's party) in 1977.¹⁶

The *Bharatiya Jana Sangh* party itself came out of the independence of India in 1947. And the party itself was founded in 1951 as a vehicle to gather Hindus in one party to win power by constitutional way.¹⁷ Designated as a political vehicle, it consciously utilizes Hinduism to support its evolvment as a nationalist party. Being as such, its political orientation has been named as Hindutva politics.¹⁸ And this kind of politics considers India as Hindu Rashtra, a state that is prescriptively attached to Hinduism. It even applies to policies on developing artistic buildings/monuments.¹⁹ Its evolvment leads to a merge in 1977 with Janata Dal party to create a new party named Bharatiya Janata Party.

Background of the party itself is division of the Hindus dan Muslims following the 1947 independence of India from the British colonialism, and the internal schism of Hindus that separates them into two political poles: first, the liberal-secular Hindu presented by the Congress Party led by Jawaharlal Nehru, and second, the Hindu-based nationalist presented by the Bharatiya Jana Sangh party (Indian People's Party).²⁰ From the divisions, the Hindutva politics came into being, taking position as a party promoting and defending Hindus and the land of India from influence of the liberal-secular nationalists, and Muslims. This has been confirmed in several public appearances of it throughout India.

Its public appearances have been controversial. Mohamad Omar, discussing it through critical discourse analysis, describes its controversy in the following: "the politics of Hindu nationalism has often caused violent disruptions in the form of polgroms, coordinated attacks and vigilantism targeted to-

¹⁶ Yoosuk Kim, *Indian Electoral Politics and the Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)*. Master Thesis. Florida State University, 2006, vii.

¹⁷ Bruce Desmond Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics*, 3.

¹⁸ Jyotimaya Sharma, *Hindutva: Exploring the idea of Hindu Nationalism*. India: HarperCollins Publishers, 2015.

¹⁹ Corinne Lefèvre, "Heritage Politics and Policies in Hindu Rashtra," *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academics Journal* 24/25 (2020), 11; <https://journals.openedition.org/samaj/6728>. Accessed on September 23, 2021.

²⁰ Bruce Desmond Graham, *Hindu Nationalism and Indian Politics*, 3.

wards the Muslim population of the country.²¹ In his research, it has been promoted by organizations such as Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and Vishwa Hindu Parishada (VHP), Hindu Mahasabha (HM) and Arya Samaj.²² In each organization there is a common pattern of how each works. The first pattern is constructing a dichotomy.²³ It distinguishes the world into two: Hindus and non-Hindus in which Hindu is perceived territory and culture.²⁴ This division provides Hindu Indians more confident to live their lives as their homeland, whereas Indians who are not Hindu have less of it. In other words, it seems to have suggested a class category to Indians living in India.

Second, it insists on homogeneity of a cohesive Hindu culture.²⁵ In insisting it, policies have to be made in India must to refer to the Hindutva politics. As consequence those who are not Hindus are occupied with all Hindu ornaments surrounding them. So, it is inferable to say that its public appearance is various ranging from violence acts to artistic presence.

Part of its public appearance in India is its relation with other faith communities. Related to this, Ashok V. Chowgule, writing *Christianity in India The Hindutva Perspective*, expresses its way of dealing with other faith communities. In his writing Chowgule states two expected things from Christians by the *Hinduvavadis* (adherents of Hindutva, the authors of the paper): 1. Christians in India have to learn to accommodate their philosophy within the Hindu paradigm, which is also the paradigm of their biological ancestors, and 2. Indian Christians have to determine their own place in the society in India.²⁶ By saying its expectations, the present paper's authors seems to think of Chowgule as proposing other faith communities under its hegemony in order to respect it and its Hindus. For instance, in other passage of the book, Chowgule writes on

²¹ Mohammad Omar, *The Muslim Threat in Right Wing Narratives*. SSAI Working Paper Series 2021. University of London, 2021, 3. <https://www.soas.ac.uk/south-asia-institute/publications/working-papers/file152729.pdf>. Accessed on September 23, 2021.

²² Mohammad Omar, *The Muslim Threat in Right Wing Narratives*, 3.

²³ Mohammad Omar, *The Muslim Threat in Right Wing Narratives*, 5.

²⁴ Mohammad Omar, *The Muslim Threat in Right Wing Narratives*, 5.

²⁵ Mohammad Omar, *The Muslim Threat in Right Wing Narratives*, 5.

²⁶ Ashok V. Chowgule, *Christianity in India The Hindutva Perspective*. Mumbai: Hindu Vivek Kendra, 1999, 78,

hypocrisy of the Catholic church in case of apologizing to Jews and South American Indians for what it had done in the past, but the church denied to do so towards Hindus.²⁷

Yogi Adityanath, among other figures of the BJP members, who is also a Hindu monk and has been heading Uttar Pradesh state since 2017, is widely known as presenting the Hindutva politics towards other faith communities in India. The state which Adityanath heads is the largest state of India. He is fame for his anti-Muslim rhetoric, and other controversial jargons.²⁸

A.2. *Spiritual Approach:*

In this approach, love is among noble values of Hinduism. Julius Lipner states that *Bhagavadgītā* is source to understand the love of God in Hinduism.²⁹ The word *Gītā* itself exposes the love of Krishna and his faithful devotee. So, therefore, he continues, *bhakti* is the best word for describing love in Hinduism.³⁰ Furthermore, he even says that it is comparable to agape in Christianity for it also conceives substantial act of the agapeistic love.³¹ Lipner, for instance, mentions *niskama karma* of the *Bhagavadgītā* as example of “the agapeistic love” in Hinduism.

What Lipner has said gets its confirmation in Mandal Dipak Kumar’s work entitled “*The Doctrine of Niskama Karma of the Bhagavadgītā: A Critical Study*”.³² In his work, Kumar describes it as follows “when an action is done merely as a duty, that is to say without entertaining the hope of fruit, it becomes *niskama karma*.”³³ In other words, *niskama karma* means abandonment

²⁷ Ashok V. Chowgule, *Christianity in India The Hindutva Perspective*, 72-73.

²⁸ Nilanjana Bhowmick, *Meet the Militant Monk Spreading Islamophobia in India*. Washington Post, March 24, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2017/03/24/meet-the-militant-monk-spreading-islamophobia-in-india/>. Accessed on October 4, 2021.

²⁹ Julius Lipner, *Capturing Gods: The God of Love, and the Love of God in Christian and Hindu Tradition*, Boardman Lectureship in Christian Ethics 3, 1998, 18.

³⁰ Julius Lipner, *Capturing Gods: The God of Love, and the Love of God in Christian and Hindu Tradition*, 21.

³¹ Julius Lipner, *Capturing Gods: The God of Love, and the Love of God in Christian and Hindu Tradition*, 21.

³² Mandal Dipak Kumar, *The Doctrine of Niskama Karma of the Bhagavadgītā: A Critical Study*. Ph. D. Thesis. Vidyasagar University, 2010, 25.

³³ Mandal Dipak Kumar, *The Doctrine of Niskama Karma of the Bhagavadgītā: A Critical Study*, 25.

of hope or fruits of actions.³⁴ Kumar refers to chapter eighteen of the Bhagavadgītā as his scriptural reasoning of the *niskama karma* from which he gets the meaning of *niskama karma* as action that is the most excellent is performed desirelessly, after abandoning the hope for the fruit of the action.”³⁵

Jagat Pal, writing a piece of paper entitled *The Concept of Niskama Karma: Teleological or Deontological*, emphasizes the importance of understanding the action of it as intentionally made is unavoidable, and highlights that expecting to have fruits as exchange or return of the act is avoidable.³⁶ So, Pal brings clarity of what is to be avoidable within the *Niskama Karma*, and things avoidable must be avoided.

Core content of the *niskama karma* as absence of desires to hope fruits of action has certain construction. And the construction cannot be separated from its meaning and actions prescribing to it. As it can be referred to its meaning, *niskama karma* prescribes certain acts as to present its meaning. One thing that is clearly possible to mention of the actions is any actions done has no expectation of benefit to return to those who do the acts. So, the *niskama karma* implies an expose of not-seeking-profits desires from doing/delivering something. The exposure of its core desire will help understand what are practical acts implied in it. This construction implies practical acts such as self-sacrificing, sincerity and anti-gratification. These practical acts are therefore part of love in Hinduism teaching.

With such perception of love in Hinduism, and its practical acts, the word “religious” of religious radicalism in form of Hindu nationalism may be examined through its lens. In previous section the paper has laid two questions to commence the examination of it. These two questions direct us to see its teaching and public appearance to find whether or not the teaching of love in Hinduism are visible in it.

To examine it, Catarina Kinvall’s article might provide help to proceed its process to get result of the examination. Her articles point out the presence of “ontological insecurity”,

³⁴ Mandal Dipak Kumar, *The Doctrine of Niskama Karma of the Bhagavadgītā: A Critical Study*, 25.

³⁵ Mandal Dipak Kumar, *The Doctrine of Niskama Karma of the Bhagavadgītā: A Critical Study*, 25.

³⁶ Jagat Pal, *The Concept of Niskama Karma: Teleological or Deontological?* *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* XXVIII No. 2, April 2001, 217-219.

sourcing masculinization of Indian politics during Narendra Modi's regime, as *raison d'être* of Hindu nationalism came into being.³⁷ In her work, that sort of ontology, to paraphrasing her work, is invented imaginary place to utilize memories, places and symbols of Hinduism to construct identity narrative in form populism politics.³⁸ By looking at her work, and connecting it to the love in Hinduism teaching, author of the present paper sees no connection between the two.

Disconnection between the two is confirmed when we compare Constitution of the Bharatiya Janata Party, finding out its spiritual dimension, and the public appearances of it. In its constitution, it declares its position as source of opportunity equality, of faith liberty and of expression to create a just society in economic, social and politics regardless sex, creeds and castes.³⁹ What is declared in the constitution has the spirituality of love in Hinduism, but its public appearances seem to be negligence to the teaching.

B. Buddhist Bin Laden

B.1. Historical Approach: Origin and Public Appearance

This media-name "Buddhist Bin Laden" is referring to Ashin Wirathu. Among other marks promoting his fame in public space of Myanmar, he is widely known for his following statement: "Most Muslims destroy our country, our people and the Buddhist religion."⁴⁰ He emerges to Myanmar's public space amidst the heat controversy of Rohingya in Myanmar, putting Muslims at center of the controversy. The paper sees his appearance in public is so much related to layers of the country's history, and each layer marks landscape change of the country. The paper will address in the following.

³⁷ Catarina Kinvall, "Populism, Ontological Insecurity, and Hindutva: Modi and Masculinization of Indian" politics. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 32:3, 2019, DOI: 10.1080/09557571.2019.1588851.

³⁸ Catarina Kinvall, "Populism, Ontological Insecurity, and Hindutva: Modi and Masculinization of Indian politics", 283.

³⁹ The Bharatiya Janata Party, *Constitution and Rules*. India: 2012, 1.

⁴⁰ Shasank Bengali, "Monk dubbed 'Buddhist Bin Laden' targets Myanmar's persecuted Muslims," Los Angeles Times, May 24, 2015 <https://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-ff-myanmar-monk-20150524-story.html>. Accessed on September 23, 2021.

In his recent research on relation of Buddhism and Myanmar's politics, Matthew J. Walton, wandering in Burmese language sources for the research, concludes the research by saying that Theravada Buddhism has been source for building "moral universe" of the politics of the country.⁴¹ In the book he has made clear of that as to refer to the Theravada cosmology functioned in legitimating power and providing models of political organization.⁴² Furthermore, Walton writes that for Buddhists of Myanmar the moral actions of both leaders and members of communities have tangible effects in material world.⁴³ So, therefore, the presence of Buddhist Bin Laden in Myanmar is of course related to what Walton has done in his research. In this regard, the paper's authors think of what Walton's research has contributed to making up such figure came into public is it has described spiritual environment allowing the figure to come to public space.

Francis Wade's research shows that Myanmar as a place from which such figure comes up in public space, both nationally and internationally, had been under the British colonialization and it was the time where Buddhism had not been official religion of the country.⁴⁴ By saying so, Wade seems to have proposed that the presence of Buddhist Bin Laden is a current phenomenon taking place in Myanmar's post colonialism of the British period. It is however Wade makes it clearer that seeds of making conflict between Muslims and Buddhists comes to happen had been cultivated during its colonialism period. It is even possible to pull out its roots to the pre-colonial period of the country as the work of Juliane Schober suggests that Theravada Buddhism had actually been dominating culture of the country, making hegemony upon other cultures.⁴⁵ For instance, Schober mentions about authority of the court that is sustained by the Buddhist teachings coming as the word

⁴¹ Matthew J. Walton, *Buddhism, Politics, and Political Thought in Myanmar*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2017.

⁴² Matthew J. Walton, *Buddhism, Politics, and Political Thought in Myanmar*, 4.

⁴³ Matthew J. Walton, *Buddhism, Politics, and Political Thought in Myanmar*, 4.

⁴⁴ Francis Wade, *Myanmar's Enemy Within: Buddhist Violence and the Making of A Muslim Other*. London: Zed Books, 2017, 18.

⁴⁵ Juliane Schober, *Modern Buddhist Conjunctions in Myanmar: Cultural Narratives, Colonial Legacies and Civil Society*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011.

of the Buddha.⁴⁶ Another example is, Schober writes, kings of precolonial times of Myanmar have religious and ritual obligations and these two are fundamental for being source of political power of the kings.⁴⁷ They are entitled *dharmarāja*, the righteous Buddhist rulers.⁴⁸

Myanmar is believed to have been known since the first century.⁴⁹ Its historical existence is comprised of layers, including Muslim Myanmar. Therefore, so to speak, Muslim Myanmar is part of the country's history. Actually, Muslim Myanmar are part of Ancient Arakan.⁵⁰ Its present location in today's Myanmar is in Arakan state. However, this long story of Muslim Myanmar living in the country seems to be unknown for many people or concealed behind dominant narrative of Buddhist characters of the country. Therefore, knowing arrival story of Muslims in the country, and how this group lives in colonial and Independence period of the country are that of importance due to it has contributed to the rise of Buddhist Bin Laden.

In Ronan Lee's note, it had in the past been location for four major kingdoms: Dhanyawadi, Vesali, Lemro, and Mrauk-U.⁵¹ So, it is originally a Buddhism-based state.

Even it is believed that Buddha had visited Dhanyawadi Kingdom of Arakan.⁵² Since then it is believed as the beginning of Buddhism in Arakan.⁵³ Interesting account on the visit of Buddha to the soil, Than Tun writes, it is said that Buddha had spent seven days and been able to convert 84,000 people during this visit.⁵⁴

⁴⁶ Juliane Schober, *Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Myanmar: Cultural Narratives, Colonial Legacies and Civil Society*, 3.

⁴⁷ Juliane Schober, *Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Myanmar: Cultural Narratives, Colonial Legacies and Civil Society*, 18.

⁴⁸ Juliane Schober, *Modern Buddhist Conjunctures in Myanmar: Cultural Narratives, Colonial Legacies and Civil Society*, 18.

⁴⁹ Ronan Lee, *Myanmar's Rohingya Genocide: Identity, History and Hate Speech*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2021, 18.

⁵⁰ Ronan Lee, *Myanmar's Rohingya Genocide: Identity, History and Hate Speech*.

⁵¹ Ronan Lee, *Myanmar's Rohingya Genocide: Identity, History and Hate Speech*, 15.

⁵² Ronan Lee, *Myanmar's Rohingya Genocide: Identity, History and Hate Speech*, 19.

⁵³ Ronan Lee, *Myanmar's Rohingya Genocide: Identity, History and Hate Speech*, 20.

⁵⁴ Than Tun, *History of Buddhism in Burma AD 1000-1300*. Ph.D Thesis. London: the University of London, 1956, 2.

Lee writes on the coming of Islam to Arakan as close as its coming to India dated in 629.⁵⁵ It is so because Myanmar and India share border among them and activities on sea between these two countries are already established by that day. This allows both have also close date of its coming to each country though Lee does not give further elaboration on it. The coming of Muslim in Arakan may be seen as the first mark of its landscape changes. Another mark is the conquer of the Arakan

The conquest of Arakan by Burma in 1784 serves another mark of the change. It is so because following the defeat statue of the Mahāmuni has been removed to Mandalay.⁵⁶ Furthermore, Lee writes, it is also a symbolic representation of incorporation of Arakan into Burmese Buddhist polity, both spiritually and temporally.⁵⁷ In other words, the conquer has made Buddhism and politics collided and solid in Myanmar, and people of other faiths began to formally live within such politics dominating Myanmar soil.

Colonialism of the British on the soil, started in 1885, is other mark of the landscape change of the country. It interrupts the domination of Buddhism through the monarchy system, sharpens division of Buddhism and Muslims, and inspires nationalism awareness, and political movements against the British colonialism. It also leads to the country's independence in 1948. Under the colonialism, social life in the country allowed the British people to occupy top position, put Indian and Chinese on middle position and left the people of Myanmar behind.⁵⁸ So, therefore, it is one of causes triggering revolution against the British colonialism which leads the country to attain its independency from the British colonial master. In this period, both Buddhists and Muslims suffered from policies made by the British. For instance, Juliane Schober writes about the Buddhists lost their privilege in education for the British replaced it with the British model of education.⁵⁹ Likewise, the

⁵⁵ Ronan Lee, Myanmar's Rohingya Genocide: Identity, History and Hate Speech, 21.

⁵⁶ Ronan Lee, Myanmar's Rohingya Genocide: Identity, History and Hate Speech, 19.

⁵⁷ Ronan Lee, Myanmar's Rohingya Genocide: Identity, History and Hate Speech, 19.

⁵⁸ Ba Maw, Breakthrough in Myanmar: Memoirs of A Revolution 1939-1946. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968.

⁵⁹ Juliane Schober, Modern Buddhist Conjunction in Myanmar: Cultural Narratives, Colonial Legacies, and Civil Society, 13.

British had been able to separate Muslims and their Myanmar identity.⁶⁰ The two are examples on how colonial legacies are inherited into period where they do not exist anymore, causing social tensions among the people including the Rohingya issues. Related to this, Schober's note shows that 1938 has witnessed the establishment of All Burma Young Monks as a result of anti-Muslim sentiments.⁶¹ Seeds of the sentiments continue to grow after the British was toppled down from Myanmar.

Its independence from the British marks another mark of the change for it allows Buddhism to return to its political, and the sentiments find their growing place in the country. Within this historical trajectory the Buddhist bin Laden phenomenon comes into being.

B.2. *Spiritual Approach*

Buddhism teaching on love is rooted in *Metta* teaching. *Metta* simply means loving kindness or pure love.⁶² It is part of Metta Sutta in Metta meditation practices.⁶³ This Metta Sutta is part of a book named *Aṅguttara Nikāya* in book of the Elevelns whose title is Metta Sutta.⁶⁴ In the book it is said the following:⁶⁵

“if, Oh Bhikkhus, the liberation of the mind through loving-kindness is practiced, developed, made much of, made one's vehicle and foundation, firmly established, consolidated and thoroughly undertaken, eleven benefits are to be expected.”

⁶⁰ Melissa Crouch (Editor), *Islam and the State in Myanmar: Muslim-Buddhist Relation and the Politics of Belonging*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

⁶¹ Juliane Schober, *Modern Buddhist Conjuncture in Myanmar: Cultural Narratives, Colonial Legacies and Civil Society*, 156.

⁶² Nalanda Holistic Education for Integral Human Development, *Metta Sutta*, <http://nalanda.org.my/e-library/mettasutta/download/Metta%20Sutta.pdf>. Accessed on October 10, 2021.

⁶³ Nalanda Holistic Education for Integral Human Development, *Metta Sutta*, <http://nalanda.org.my/e-library/mettasutta/download/Metta%20Sutta.pdf>. Accessed on October 10, 2021.

⁶⁴ Nyanaponika Thera and Bhikhu Bodhi, *Aṅguttara Nikāya Discourses of the Buddha: An Anthology* Part III. Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 2008, 28. a

⁶⁵ Nalanda Holistic Education for Integral Human Development, *Benefits of Metta*, <http://nalanda.org.my/e-library/mettasutta/download/Metta%20Sutta.pdf>. Accessed October 10, 2021.

The Eleven Benefits of it are 1). One sleeps in comfort, 2). One wakes in comfort, 3). One has no bad dreams, 4). One is dear to human being, 5). One is dear to non-human being, 6). One is protected by deities, 7). One is not harmed by fire, 8). One can concentrate easily, 9). One's facial complexion is calm and serene, 10). One dies unconfused, and 11). If one does not attain anything higher, one will reborn in the Brahma world after death.⁶⁶

Taking the benefits into consideration on understanding love in Buddhism, it, in this *Metta Sutta*, may be described as a liberation practice through meditation exercises in which one attain the eleven benefits, one side, and after which the Brahma world after death can be obtained as well. In other words, love implies a well-being life in present life and after life, and this sort of well-being life is in-line with the whole teaching of Buddha.

Inferring from the Metta Sutta teaching, love in Buddhism can simply be perceived as well- being life. And it is the very foundational teaching of Buddha from which the noble truth of Buddhism comes into being addressing the very foundational problems of human being called *dukkha* or suffering. And this well-being of Buddhism is certainly relevant to be used as examination tool to assess spiritual content of religious radicalism in form of Buddhist Bin Laden.

To examine it the present paper will start with constructions attached in well-being life. What has it offered on the constructions of well-being life Buddhism? In present life, the paper's authors think that it offers the following constructions of well-being: 1. One is liberated from a desire of making other's life threatened, 2. One is liberated from his/her own *dukkha* coming from his/her desire to have a return of doing something, and so forth.

Then, with those constructions, the paper will use the constructions and return to what Buddhist Bin Laden has done to examine his actions through the lens of the constructions. Fundamental thing to mention on what Ashin Wirathu has done as a Buddhist Bin Laden is terror.⁶⁷ His terror action, examined

⁶⁶ Nalanda Holistic Education for Integral Human Development, Benefits of Metta, <http://nalanda.org.my/e-library/mettasutta/download/Metta%20Sutta.pdf>. Accessed October 10, 2021.

⁶⁷ Peter A. Cooclanis. "Terror in Burma: Buddhists vs Muslims." *World Affairs*, Vol. 176, no. 4, 2013.

through the lens, is obviously not bringing well-being life to others, and himself. He instead creates fear to others' lives. Second thing to mention is he offers hatred towards others in form of arising Islamophobia among people of Myanmar.⁶⁸

These two examples of his action, authors of the present paper concludes that religious aspect of religious radicalism in form of Buddhist Bin Laden is improper action taken by a Buddhist monk. It moves to opposite direction from the Buddha teaching on love in which Buddha promotes well-being life to oppose *dukkha*.

C. Christian Nationalism

C.1. *Historical Approach: Origin and Public Appearance*

It comes to re-appear in American public space in form of Riot at Capitol Hill on January 6, 2021 following the defeat of Donald Trump on his second term presidential election.⁶⁹ In the case of the Capitol Hill, Sojourners displays a picture of Alex Jones, a founder of the conspiracy theory, *Infowars*, marches to the Capitol with people bringing a cross with a writing "Jesus Saves" on it.⁷⁰ And it has become specific academic concern discussed by Andrew L. Whitehead, and Samuel L. Perry and their research has been published under the title "*Taking Back America for God*".

Both Whitehead and Perry address a survey conducted by Baylor Religion Survey held in 2017. The survey shows four groups of America and their firm position on Christian Nationalism of America, and each exists in public of the country. And the discussed positions are Ambassadors (those who believe America is founded in Christianity and view themselves as its ambassadors), Accommodators (those who believe America is founded in Christianity but they don't consider themselves as its ambassadors), Resisters (those who resist

⁶⁸ Naved Bakali, "Islamophobia in Myanmar: the Rohingya Genocide and the "war on terror"", *Race and Class*, 62 (4), 2021.

⁶⁹ Gina Ciliberto, and Stephanie Russel-Kraft, "They Invaded the Capitol Saying Jesus is My Savior, and Trump is My President", *Sojourner*, January 7, 2021, <https://sojo.net/articles/they-invaded-capitol-saying-jesus-my-savior-trump-my-president>. Accessed on October 13, 2021.

⁷⁰ Gina Ciliberto, and Stephanie Russel-Kraft, "They Invaded the Capitol Saying Jesus is My Savior and Trum is My President, January 7, 2021, , <https://sojo.net/articles/they-invaded-capitol-saying-jesus-my-savior-trump-my-president>. Accessed on October 13, 2021.

the believe, but they don't reject the idea), and Rejecters (those who resist and reject the believe).⁷¹ Percentage of each is as follows: the Ambassadors have 19.8%, the Accommodators get 32.1%, the Resisters are 26.6% and the Rejecters have 21.5%.⁷²

People composing the Christian Nationalism group see themselves as Christians who long to have particular Christianity be attached to America's politics.⁷³ The present paper's authors think that its presence in the American public space cannot be separated from the changing of religious landscape of America. Within this setting, the paper views the past American, which once was widely believed and called as a Christian nation, and the present America that has become a more multicultural and multireligious nation have significantly contributed to the birth of Christian nationalism.

John Fea's book, for instance, describes historical ingredients that help establish foundation of the belief. In his book entitled *Was America founded as a Christian nation? A Historical Introduction*, Fea identifies Evangelical America of 1789-1865 as foundation of the belief.⁷⁴ Within this specific period of time, the authors of the present paper views that the past America was less multicultural and multireligious, allowing the groups of Evangelical Americans to dominate the country and fill its content with their daily activities from which definition of the state as a Christian nation comes up. And it becomes cultural memory among the groups that is alive up to this day, believing and accepting America as a Christian nation.

On other venue, Andrew L. Seidel offers Judeo-Cristiano as root of making Christian Nationalism as a belief.⁷⁵ What Seidel offers might slightly differ to what Fea's identified for Seidel brings up Judaic dimension of it, whereas Fea's only takes Christianity as its content. However, the authors of the present

⁷¹ Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry, *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States*. Oxford. Oxford University Press, 2020, 69-70.

⁷² Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry, *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States*, 69-70.

⁷³ Andrew L. Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry, *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States*, 10.

⁷⁴ John Fea, *Was America founded as a Christian Nation: A Historical Introduction*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Know Press, 2016, 3-21.

⁷⁵ Andrew L. Seidel, *The Founding Myth: Why Christian Nationalism is un-American*. New York: Sterling, 2019, 114.

paper consider both offers are making the belief parallel to one another. Important point that Seidel puts-in at the center of his book is Christian Nationalism, functioned as a belief of claiming America is Christian state, is a myth. Therefore, according Seidel's research, there is no such thing in history of America.

To prove it, Seidel set up his research on oppositional direction, contrasting Christian Nationalism with America. For instance, part two of his books is entitled United States versus the Bible, and part three is entitled The Ten Commandments versus the Constitution.

In exploring each part, Seidel describes his main thesis that Christian Nationalism is a myth. For instance, Seidel put into examination a belief held by supporters of this ideology that Biblical principles influenced the founding fathers,⁷⁶ and at end of his examination, he stated that “.. neither Lincoln nor Ethan Allen can be considered Christian merely because they read and quoted the Bible.”⁷⁷ In fact, Seidel writes, Allen's knowledge on the Bible led him to write a book entitled Reason: The Only Oracle of Man (1785), and this book was widely recognized as the first freethought books in America.⁷⁸

C.2. *Spiritual Approach*

Love in Christianity is a very fundamental teaching. It is rooted in the coming of Jesus to human affairs, his life among human beings, and his mission. Often quoted verse to present it in its teaching is John 3:16. There are more verses on love in the Bible. Love has been source for many Christians develop their spirituality and academic research. For instance, Søren Kierkegaard's book on *Works of Love*, exploring Christianity's love in philosophical way.⁷⁹

In Christianity, for instance, the Gospel of John exposes love as a commandment and it is about to love for one another and love for enemies (Greek: *agape tous echthrous hymon*).⁸⁰David

⁷⁶ Andrew L. Seidel, *The Founding Myth, Why Christian Nationalism is un-American*, 209.

⁷⁷ Andrew L. Seidel, *The Founding Myth, Why Christian Nationalism is un-American*, 211.

⁷⁸ Andrew L. Seidel, *The Founding Myth, Why Christian Nationalism is un-American*, 211.

⁷⁹ Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*. Translated by David F. Swenson, and Lilian Marvin Swenson. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1949.

⁸⁰ David Rensberger, “Love for one another and love for enemies in the Gospel of John.” Willard

Rensberger writes that the love commandment in the Gospel of John is a “new” order.⁸¹ Being as such, Rensberger says that it is a specific order that only applies to internal Christian community of the Johannine due to internal conflict exists among them.⁸² However, it does not necessarily mean that love in Christianity is an exclusive love for Rensberger also states that Matthew 5:44 as rudimentary source of viewing love in Christianity as inclusive love, embracing others who are not Christians.⁸³ By addressing the specific sort of love, Rensberger seems to have suggested that “those who are enemies within the Johannine community” are subject to love to practice discipleship among them that is united in Christ.⁸⁴

On other venue, William Klassen writes, reflecting on “love your enemies,” that views “the enemies not refer to distant neighbor”, but rather “idea” within which love raises and evolves.⁸⁵ Specifically putting “enemies” in a more ontological way, enemies are not individuals that are more visible, but point to “ideational” thing that is more invisible and influential make others enemies. It is unseen like virus, but it exists and can infect people as much as it spreads widely in the air. However, Klassen’s further notes on enemy in Luke and Matthew makes it more visible. In it he mentions category of enemy such as those who hate, those who curse and those who treat you spitefully.⁸⁶

From the aforementioned works of Rensberger and Klassen, it is clear that love has its own constructions. And its constructions are practices showing what love is. So, to love is not to hate, curse and treat others spitefully, and the practices apply for everyone, both Christian fellows, and people of other faiths. Basing the examination of Christian nationalism in the

M. Swartley (Editor), *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992, 297-313.

⁸¹ David Rensberger, “Love for one another and love for enemies in the Gospel of John,” 304.

⁸² David Rensberger, “Love for one another and love for enemies in the Gospel of John,” 304, 300.

⁸³ David Rensberger, “Love for one another and love for enemies in the Gospel of John,” 304.

⁸⁴ David Rensberger, “Love for one another and love for enemies in the Gospel of John,” 307.

⁸⁵ William Klassen, “Love your enemies”: Some Reflections on the Current Status of Research,” Willard M. Swartley (Editor), *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992, 7.

⁸⁶ William Klassen, “Love your enemies: Some Reflections on the Current Status of Research,” 9.

teaching of love in Christianity, the phenomenon will therefore be asked the following questions: 1. How has Christian love been observed within the group of Christian nationalism? 2. How has Christian love been applied in public appearance of the group? The questions will help us see “religious” aspect of the group as religious radicalism.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

After examining each presentation of religious radicalism with the proposed approaches, the paper concludes that religious radicalism is a political post-truth over religion rather than an attempt to apply love as fundamental religious teaching of each presentation group into the groups, and to apply it to public appearances of the groups allowing people to feel religious dimension of the groups by translating love into practical programs of the groups.

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Rev. Dr Abraham Silo Wilar is Programme Executive Interreligious Dialogue and Co-operation of the World Council of Churches, specialises in Interreligious Studies and serves General Secretary of Interreligious Relation Commission at the Communion of Churches in Indonesia. He accomplished his studies at Jakarta Theological Seminary, Hartford Seminary (now Hartford International University), and Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies of Gadjah Mada University. He can be reached at asilowilar@gmail.com or Abraham.Wilar@wcc-coe.org



UTOPIA AND DYSTOPIA IN CENTRAL KALIMANTAN: REFLECTION ON BEST PRACTICE TO OVERCOME THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

Marko Mahin

INTRODUCTION

As a matter of fact, Central Kalimantan is a very dynamic region. The region's expansion is in the form of 13 regencies and one city. Urbanization and migration that trigger population growth, the arrival of foreign and domestic capital investment have made the landscape of Central Kalimantan experience a shift or change. Central Kalimantan is no longer an expanse of a green rainforest filled with wild and exotic flora and fauna. It has slowly but surely turned into a residential area, plantations, mines, and others. It is not surprising because, according to a report by Gaveau et al., that 75.7% (558,060 km²) of Borneo's area (737,188 km²) had forested around 1973. A forest cover map for 2010 derived using ALOS-PALSAR and visually reviewing LANDSAT images, estimated that the 1973 forest area had declined by 168,493 km² (30.2%) in 2010.¹

Central Kalimantan is one of the many provinces of Indonesia that possess abundant natural resources. In an area of 153,564.50 Km², there we can find stories in the past and current times about the golden age of forests, the heyday of mining, and the heyday of plantations. In a region full of natural resources, people should live in prosperity. However, like the resource curse theory proposed by

¹ David L. A. Gaveau et al. (2014) Four Decades of Forest Persistence, Clearance and Logging on Borneo. *PLoS ONE* 9(7): e101654. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0101654>

Richard Auty, Central Kalimantan is experiencing an “abundance paradox,” which has abundant natural resources, but it does not bring progress and prosperity to its people. The wealth and welfare of natural resources have not been distributed or shared for all. Environmental activists strongly warn that the central Kalimantan is headed toward ecological destruction. Natural phenomena such as forest fires, regular floods every year and catastrophes caused by fog show that environmental management in this region is impoverished.

Moreover, the central Kalimantan is constantly threatened by the “curse of peatlands”, which is a catastrophe of forest and ground fires that occur periodically. The World Bank estimated an economic loss of over US\$16 billion due to forest fires in Indonesia in 2015. That means more than twice the cost of reconstruction after the 2004 tsunami.² Central Kalimantan occupies second place after South Sumatra in terms of wildfires. Between June and October 2015, approximately 429 hectares of forest were burned in central Kalimantan.³

These facts and figures are an early warning that there is an irony and blurred image, a terrible scenario, which tells a devastated central Kalimantan. This could ruin the future. However, as active individuals, the people of central Kalimantan should not accept this data and facts as immutable destinies.

Based on the consciousness that the terrible situation is the outcome of human actions. In other words, it is not impossible to change things. People in central Kalimantan have the potential to be involved in preventing, inhibiting or reducing the negative impacts of these rapid changes. They can be actors who actively and consciously design or predict a glorious future for their lives. Peter Drucker [or Abraham Lincoln?] states that the best way to predict the future is to create it.

This paper reflects some of the best practices that we have been carrying out to overcome the environmental crisis in Central Kalimantan. Start with an explanation of what we have done, followed by reflection, the process of reflection to examine

² Ann Jeannette Glauber and Iwan Gunawan, *The Cost of Fire an Economic Analysis of Indonesia's 2015 Fire Crisis*, (The World Bank, 2015). <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2015/12/01/indonesias-fire-and-haze-crisis>,

³ Andrea Höing, *The complexity of forest fires in Indonesia. Local perspectives on livelihood adaptations after fire disturbances, a case study from Central Kalimantan*” (Tentative Final Report for the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education, 28 Februari 2018).

and evaluate whether this has been done optimally or whether improvements are needed.

WHAT HAVE DONE?

1. Building a Dream

Dreams according to Asians are not just dreams. Dreams can be visions and directions to move forward. There are good dreams, but there are also terrible dreams. Hence, are different ways to avoid having bad dreams and still have good dreams. A dream is only a dream if only one person dreams, but the dream will happen when people dream together.

Based on that thought, we held the Workshop on Building a Dream Together in order to educate others and oneself on understanding and overcoming the ecological crisis not to become a nightmare.

This activity brings together relevant stakeholders from different sectors to discuss sensitive issues concerning environmental transformation, such as mining activities and palm oil production. Through this activity, we created a space for critical discussion, where power relationships were more issues than reaffirmed. As well as companies, representatives from all other sectors were involved. They discussed the status quo, conflicts and future prospects regarding socio-economic transformation in central Kalimantan.

During the workshop, participants are encouraged to describe the current and future situation as increasingly problematic. As a result, deforestation and environmental degradation were associated with growing social injustice, loss of local culture and knowledge, and a declining economy. All participants agreed that the central Kalimantan is rich in natural resources but has a poor performance in social, political and economic development. The lower level of development was associated with weak corporate-dominated government. Conflicts in recent decades have been primarily related to reduced access, control and land management. Participants argued that civil society is currently weak due to the exclusion of community members and activists from relevant political processes. However, participants described opportunities for change in the creation and strengthening of civil society

organisations that should challenge, control and change the executive and legislative.

Thanks to this workshop, we have obtained clear information that rich natural resource deposits do not automatically generate increases in global economic and social development in the region. The major problems of mining are environmental pollution and the destruction of people who are still dependent on the subsistence economy. Some settlements in the mining areas, for example, still lack clean water and have no stable power supply. Ironically, the mined coal will be used for coal-fired power plants in Indonesia, providing energy mainly for the island of Java and not Kalimantan. As a result, coal mining is highly controversial.

Through these encounters, we learned the importance of dreaming together. The dream will push people to walk together, so the travel becomes long and distant. As the African proverb says, "If you want to go fast, walk alone, but if you want to go far, walk together." We also learned that local problems related to the environment always have a relationship with global problems, namely energy problems. Consequently, the struggle to cope with the environmental crisis in Kalimantan must take place on a network with the global community.

2. Wrestle through lunch plate

Large-scale deforestation threatens the well-being and culture of the native peoples of central Kalimantan. This means that indigenous peoples lose their forest, which is their attic or their food source. Forests for indigenous peoples are not only wood, but supermarkets and medical drugstores. They get food to live off the forest, medicines, materials to build houses, proper equipment and the manufacture of cultural goods such as handicrafts. They also obtain other forest products that can be sold as cash for basic necessities. The rainforest is the mother of life. If the forest is damaged, they will be damaged as well.

The loss of the forest is facing a change in lifestyle, from harvesting to an industrial model based on big plantations, which are very foreign to them. Food sources such as tubers and vegetables are increasingly difficult to obtain - the need for external food is undernourished. The separation of the forest

community has led to changes in crop modes, lifestyles and production structure.

The conversion of forest lands not only makes local food sources extinct, but also kills the sociocultural system of the community, such as cooperation, the loss of the tradition of storing food in the kitchen barn. Land grabbing has changed the surrounding area, moving people away from productive farmland. Annexation of land always entails displacement or exclusion.

What is striking is the change or change in the food patterns of nature and process (slow food) to an unnatural and fast (instant) almost without treatment (fast food). The instantaneous culture renders them not dependent on nature or the forest, but on the food industry. The change began to appear when they began eating instant noodles, instant spices, instant snacks. To buy these goods, they must have a stock of money because they must buy from a store or a market. Progressively, these activities erode their collective memory of their rich local food potential. They are increasingly shifting to become urban, in the sense of making the market the centre of their livelihood (no longer centered on agricultural resources). They depend entirely on food supplies supplied by capitalists and sold in traditional and modern markets. As a result, the foundation of life is no longer the nature, the availability of food, but the availability of money. To have a pool of funds, mothers have to work hard to obtain a decent salary. Because they are busy working and no longer have free time for their families, mothers are forced to buy instant or cooked food to serve at the dinner table, which can lead to hidden hunger. People experience food shortages, in this case not only the satisfaction of daily food needs, but also related to quality (nutrition), food variety (menu), and continuity.⁴

With the women of three villages, we developed activities to save the forest area through mapping, compiling a list of food types in the area. We also lobbied the government to protect their food zones and not turn them into oil palm plantations.

In addition, we also ran a campaign on local food, through meetings and distribution of the booklets. We encourage

⁴Aya Hirata Kimura. *Hidden Hunger: Gender and the Politics of Smarter Foods*. (Cornell University Press, 2013). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt1xx5n3>.

people to know and understand that local food is cheap, easy to get and healthy (organic) because it comes from the forest, without fertilizers or pesticides. Specifically, it does not harm the environment. We encourage them to combat deforestation with the food they consume. That by buying and eating local food, they live not only healthy, but also took part in the struggle to save the forest.

3. Walking Together with Indigenous People

The social impact of deforestation and land degradation is the breakdown of relationships between community groups. Life becomes fragmented, sharply separated, and people tend to individualism. This is, of course, detrimental because people are eventually drawn into pointing out differences rather than similarities and competition rather than cooperation, which triggers conflicts.

In this regard, the two groups always seen as different and opposite are the Church and the Indigenous Peoples. The Church has been described as a community that is isolated and uprooted from its cultural roots to become a social homeless person. On the other hand, Indigenous Peoples are described as a community full of weakness and suffering: powerless, experiencing discrimination, human rights violations, and land grabbing. The Church and Indigenous Peoples were seen as separate and opposing entities. We must admit that the Church has always been described as “light” to destroy the “darkness” of Indigenous Peoples. Otherwise, the Church is thought of as superior/subject to empower the inferior/object, namely Indigenous Peoples.

The whole dichotomy that places the Church and indigenous peoples in a binary opposition must be revised and corrected for the following reasons:

- a. Indigenous Peoples are social entities that can only be distinguished but cannot separate from the Church. In Central Kalimantan, almost all church members in rural areas are, in fact, members of the Indigenous Community. They regulate the social life they live by using customary law, such as land ownership and marriage. The relationship between the Church and Indigenous Peoples is very close and inseparable. So, what happens

with indigenous peoples will significantly affect the life of the Church and vice versa.

- b. There are weaknesses, suffering, or misery that exist in Indigenous Peoples and nobility and excellence. For example, Indigenous peoples have been carrying out conservation practices for generations by protecting forests, lakes, rivers, coasts, and surrounding natural resources. They already have a communal management system and customary rules and regulations to maintain the sustainable use of natural resources. Several reports have shown that Indigenous peoples are very useful in adapting and mitigating climate change with the local wisdom they have.

Therefore, the Church must have a new paradigm that sees Indigenous Peoples not as the other, but as part of their own body. The Church must recognize them as knowledgeable subjects who have existed and inhabited the archipelago land before the Indonesian state's existence and before the arrival of religion and modern culture.

In this regard, a church and Indigenous Community Workshop was held with the theme "Walking Together to Achieve Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation."

The general purpose of this activity is to provide an opportunity and space for meetings between Indigenous Peoples and Church leaders. Therefore, they can sit down to discuss how to realize Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation in Central Kalimantan. Also, initial exploration to find opportunities for collaboration between Indigenous Peoples and the Church to create Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation.

The lesson learned through the activity is that Indigenous Peoples are people who do not have the power to defend themselves from oppression. They live in oppression and discrimination that have been systematically institutionalized for a very long time for them to lose their critical power. They have a tendency to see chaos, injustice, the destruction of nature around them as fat. They become a voiceless minority, ostracized, ignored, considered non-existent when vital decisions are made about the land or the proper space in which

they live. This series of events resulted in the loss of their traditional land rights, a legacy of their ancestors.

In that respect, working with indigenous peoples is essential. In this way, the relationship gets closer, and there is no distance for us to hear the noise of their anxious breathing. Then we will know what the problem is and how to deal with it. We have learned to be inclusive, to allow the silence to speak, to make room for everyone.

Moreover, the Church learns to embrace those who are different, to construct solidarity in order to walk together. In this way, Indigenous peoples in different locations may know that their problems are also occurring in other communities. They can understand that they are dealing with a “common enemy”, namely a development system that is not on their side. The important thing is that they know they are not alone.

4. Advocacy for Regional Regulations for Recognition and Protection of Indigenous Peoples

In normative terms, the constitution of the State of the Republic of Indonesia prescribed the recognition and protection of indigenous peoples. Likewise, several laws also recognize the existence of customary forest communities, such as Law No. 32 of 2009 on Environmental Protection and Management, Law no. 41 of 1999 relating to forestry and Law No. 18 of 2013 in connection with the prevention and eradication of forest destruction.

While the Constitution and several sectoral laws have guaranteed the rights of indigenous peoples, in practice they have not been respected. This happened because there are not yet laws or regulations to regulate the recognition and protection of indigenous peoples.

This absence results in a legal vacuum. In addition, the legal vacuum ensures that the rights of indigenous peoples are threatened and not adequately protected. As a result, indigenous peoples lost their territories because they were included in concession areas such as plantings and mining.

Indigenous peoples are losing access to and control over their lands and natural resources due to the weakness of their rights in the domestic legal system. The existence of indigenous peoples as rights holders is acknowledged to be

mixed with specific binding requirements. Therefore, in these conditions, it becomes essential to foster the recognition of indigenous peoples as legal subjects (legal status) to ensure that indigenous peoples as rights holders are protected by law.

For this reason, we are collaborating with several universities and NGOs, encouraging the government to develop a regional regulation on the recognition and protection of indigenous peoples. We state how vital regulation is to legally ensuring respect for the human rights of indigenous peoples. To accelerate the process, we took part in the preparation of the academic document and the legal draft of the regional regulation.

In that way, we advocate the rule of law or at the policy level to influence the local government system to recognize indigenous peoples as legal subjects and protect their traditional rights such as customary lands and customary forests.

The Recognition and Protection Act makes indigenous peoples able to manage their forests and lands sustainably and reduce deforestation and land degradation, which causes the environmental crisis.

REFLECTION

Deforestation, illegal logging, land conversion into oil palm concessions and mining, and river pollution are some of the sources of the environmental crisis in central Kalimantan. Up to now, through various activities, we have expressed our disapproval, or more specifically, our resistance. We disagree that the environment is consistently underestimated and second-rate regarding industrialization, development, growth, economic improvement, and regional income. We are opposed to different types of survival and development which are not environmentally friendly. In the situation of resistance, we contemplate several things:

1. Human Rights

Environmental damage in central Kalimantan has a negative impact on the achievement of the quality of human rights, particularly for indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples lose their sources of food, clean water, medicine, decent houses

and income. They lost their humble but affluent life and peace. Due to lack of legal recognition and protection, many specific collective rights of indigenous peoples are being extinguished. As stated in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the special rights of indigenous peoples as collective rights include:

- a. The right to self-determination.
- b. Rights on Lands, Territories and Natural Resources.
- c. Right to participate (participation) and right to access information.
- d. Cultural rights of native peoples.
- e. Right to Justice

Borrowing the parable of Jesus of the Good Samaritan, the indigenous are robbed by the capitalist system, lying on the side of the road wounded and helpless. What made him such a quick target for a robbery? The Bible says, because he walked by himself with no friends. Loneliness does indeed provoke criminals to do evil.

It would be good if the church acted like the Good Samaritan, helping and taking the robbery victim to the hospital to receive treatment and care. However, it would be better if the church prevented crime by not letting the victim walk alone. The perpetrator of the crime cancels his intention to commit the crime.

2. Value Crisis and Awareness

The environmental crisis does not occur alone, especially if the impact occurs every year, such as landslides and floods. In 1967, the historian Lynn White Jr. published an article called *The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis*. White argued that the Western Christian view of the world supports and fosters aggressive humanity. He concludes that the modern technological conquest of nature that has led to our environmental crisis has in large part been made possible by the dominance in the West of this Christian worldview. Christianity, therefore 'bears an enormous burden of culpability'.⁵

⁵ Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis", in *Science*, (New York: Harvard University Center, Vol.155 No.3767, 1967), 1205

Even though there are objections from White's point of view, we must admit that the crisis is not simply an ecological crisis. It is linked to the question of value and meaning in humans with respect to the celebration of life as a whole.

In this way, the crisis cannot be separated from the cosmos either. Since the principle of the cosmos is balanced and complementary, the ecological crisis is described more precisely as a crisis of balance and alienation of humans from other entities. According to Langdon Gilkey,⁶ "modern relations to the universe, even modern human attitudes and views on nature, have led to many disasters that occur today."

According to Fritjof Capra, one of the solutions to the global environmental crisis and disaster is to build a sustainable human society based on what he calls ecological literacy, which is our ability to understand the organizational principles that apply to all life systems and use them as guidelines. In creating a sustainable society, Capra strongly emphasizes the need to redesign our communities, including educational communities, business communities, political communities, and all of our daily lives, so that these ecological principles are embodied as the principles of those communities. For Capra, such a sustainable society can be implemented through what he calls ecological design (eco-design), which is scientifically and technically very feasible to apply. It's just that the success of a large project of building a sustainable society based on ecological literacy does not only depend on the moral awareness of individuals to be ecologically literate above.⁷

3. Monument or Movement?

The environmental crisis is exact, as are the dangers and threats it poses. We are concerned to find out whether our activities do not respond to these genuine ecological problems. We are stuck building monuments to enlarge our ego, but not building a movement to solve problems in a structured, systematic, and massive way.

⁶ Langdon Gilkey, *Nature, Reality and the Sacred the Nexus of Science and Religion*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993), 79

⁷ Fritjof Capra, *The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems* (New York : Anchor Books, 1996.)

It is frightening because the success of the activity is not seen in the impact, but in the success of the conduct of training and reporting (outputs). We found ourselves engaged in organizing events, actively compiling narrative and financial reports. In the meantime, on the other hand, ecological damage goes quickly, and the community remains powerless.

Then after the completion of an activity, we are busy making proposals and lobbying donors or funding. In this respect, we sometimes lose our identity because we have to adjust to funding needs. Our fight is no longer pure, but it has filled the market's desire for funding. Our activities are no longer based on our values, but instead on the work we get from the budget.

The activities carried out eventually only became a tall, stiff, and rigid monument. Yet they have not become a movement where a lot of people have acted together to bring about change. Therefore, the activities did not generate new local leaders as movement leaders in their communities, and community initiatives were not developed. Our society is dependent on us to do nothing without us. We are caught in a non-profit industry that is taking advantage of problems, ignorance and poverty.

In the end, what had to resolve the problem became a source of problems because its main activity raised problems.

CONCLUSION

Nightmares come not just from the outside, but for ourselves as well. How we see the issues, the values we have and our activities can be a source of nightmares. For this reason, sharp auto-criticism and continuous self-reflection are needed in patterns of action and reflection so that if something goes wrong, we can still take a step back to make improvements.

To avoid becoming a source of problems, each project or activity carried out should focus on community development, where community participation and community empowerment are key points. In this way they become "people-centred, participatory, empowerment and sustainable". We hope this activity will produce movers or facilitators who can mobilize the community to save their own family, their village and their future. It is also the product

of a community task force that actively and consciously plans for the future safety of its life. We have to work to make a difference.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rev. Dr. Marko Mahin, MA is a lecturer in *Universitas Kristen Palangka Raya (UNKRIP)*, Pastor in *Gereja Kalimantan Evangelis (GKE)* and social activist in The Dayak-21 Traditional Study Institute and indigenous people forum: Heart of Borneo. He was born in Sei Kayu, 26 Maret 1969. He lives in Jl. Kalingu III No. 64, Palangka Raya 73113 Kalimantan Tengah, Indonesia. kaharingan@gmail.com.



CHURCH'S STRUGGLING FOR BUILDING JUSTICE FOR ALL IN THE CONTEXT OF MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY OF NORTH SUMATERA – INDONESIA

Rev. Jordan H. Pakpahan, M.Th

INTRODUCTION

The poverty problem in North Sumatra is multidimensional. Poverty occurs not only because of economic causes, such as a free market economy which is not conducive to the birth of a small-scale creative economy, and the low income of workers and peasants. Other causes can also be traced in the political pattern of local governments which tend to be pro-companies and local businessmen who are not friendly to the poor. So that inequality and social inequality, which is a problem of poverty, can be seen as a result of the existence and responsibility of the state which is sometimes ignored or absent for its people. In the same way, local companies and businessmen who are highly oriented towards business and profit often turn the poor and nature into manipulative objects. There are many poor people who live on a marginal basis in various remote areas in North Sumatra. They do not have broad access to development, for example education and a good quality of life. Deforestation by industry and timber businesses in various areas in North Sumatra causes destruction of the environmental ecosystems where people live and community's right to live from forest areas.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY

It is relevant today to measure the reality and level of poverty not based on monetary approach. Those who are poor are usually measured by the amount of their income per day. The category of severe poverty according to the Millennium Development Goals [MDG] document is those who earn less than \$ 1.25 per day or about Rp. 20,000 per day. Those who earn around Rp. 50,000 per day are categorized as those already above the poverty line. It not true at all. The people with an income of Rp. 50,000 per day is still considered quite vulnerable to falling into poverty because it always depends on the dynamic and fluctuating regional economic and political conditions. And there must be other issues that should be taken into account, such as the depth of poverty and its severity which are not separate from inequality. Large disparities in Indonesia are clearly seen in the situation between individuals, between groups of people and between regions. In addition to the problem of low income for the poor in Indonesia, there are other problems such as high levels of malnutrition, the rate of maternal mortality at each birth of a baby, the low level of formal education received by most of the population, difficulties in accessing clean water supplies and acute sanitation problems.¹

Poverty needs to be seen from a different approach than usual. Poverty is closely related to marginality. Those who live in the poverty line can also be called the marginalized. The marginalized are their position “which is on the margins or on the edge” (territory, policy, prosperity, etc.).² They are marginalized people who are deprived of access to natural resources and opportunities, freedom of choice and the development of personal capabilities. They are excluded not only from growth but also from the dimensions of social progress and other developments. Marginality is the forced position and condition of an individual or group on the fringes of a biophysical, ecological, economic, political and social system, which prevents them from gaining access to natural resources, assets, services, guaranteed freedom of choice, hinders the development

¹ Awal Rizky dan Nasyith Majidi, *Neoliberalisme Mencengkeram Indonesia* (Jakarta: E Publishing Company, 2008), p. 196, 202

² Joachim von Braun and Franz W. Gatzweiler, “Marginality—An Overview and Implications for Policy Marginality” dalam Joachim von Braun, Franz W. Gatzweiler [ed.], *Addressing the Nexus of Poverty, Exclusion and Ecology* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2014), p. 3

of capabilities and ultimately leads to severe poverty.³ Palash Kamruzzaman⁴ revealed that poverty is no longer understood only as absolute poverty and relative poverty, but also includes the issue of disability due to social, psychological and economic deprivation, and even includes the problem of the poor participation of various parties regarding the poverty of the poor. The aim of this approach is to encourage efforts to directly listen to the shouts of the poor that are rarely heard.

NORTH SUMATERA IN THE TURBULENCE OF GLOBAL ECONOMY

North Sumatra, as an integral part of Indonesia, is certainly affected by the global economy. Global economy includes integration of capital markets, integration of markets for goods and services, migration agreements and cultural exchanges or a combination thereof. According to Dodi Mantra's analysis, neoliberalism is the spirit that forms the basis of the spirit of the formation of the ASEAN economic community (AEC). The economic development paradigm of neoliberalism assumes that market entities are the most relevant and effective actors in determining the success of economic development within a country. In the economic development paradigm of neoliberalism, international institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and WTO play an important and central role and even tend to be hegemonic. The crisis that hit Asian countries in the late 1990s is a clear manifestation of the failure of the market as an entity that is glorified by supporters of liberalism.⁵ According to what I have observed, North Sumatra faces obstacles in dealing with ASEAN regional cooperation such as the provision of human resources, capital, infrastructure and markets. In addition, provincial governance which is held hostage by corruption and collusion is a major obstacle to the realization of development in a just and equitable manner in various districts and cities, especially in peripheral and remote areas. A corrupt government will find it difficult to create conducive conditions for

³ Joachim von Braun and Franz W. Gatzweiler., p. 3

⁴ Palash Kamruzzaman, *Dollarisation of Poverty: Rethinking Poverty Beyond 2015* (Hampshire-England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. .9-15

⁵ Dodi Mantra, *Hegemoni dan Diskursus Neoliberalisme: Menelusuri Langkah Indonesia Menuju Masyarakat Ekonomi ASEAN 2015* (Bekasi: Mantra Press, 2011), pp.1, 56-58, 83-84

the creation of a small and medium scale creative economy both in rural and urban areas. And I think such diseases also contribute to the maintenance of poverty in North Sumatra. Ann Harrison said that many studies on globalization linked to increasing inequality have found that the utility of trade does not always benefit the poor, and trade reforms in non-skilled countries do not benefit the poor. The poor will benefit from globalization when there are complementary supportive policies in their regions.⁶ Banawiratma⁷ said that Indonesia's entry into the AEC caused the multi-layered network of liberal capitalism in Indonesia at the national, regional and global levels which makes small farmers always be losers. Their lives do not change for the better due to their powerlessness to free themselves from the web of injustice that surrounds them. Moreover, there is inequality of infrastructure development in various regions in North Sumatra. Communities in rural areas that are remote and on the outskirts of the region who are generally poor are likely to find it difficult to get results from development and modernization. This is caused by the poor infrastructure of connecting roads from village to city and from village to village. It causes some difficulties for rural people to rise their economic activity.⁸

POLITICS OF POWER OF POLITICAL FIGURES AND CORRUPTION AS IMPOVERISHING EVENT

The fall of Suharto in 1998, which was the end of the authoritarian regime, actually paved the way for the start of a new post-Suharto era called the Reformasi era. In the Reformation era, there was a resurgence of political parties, the birth of good electoral laws, and legal and institutional reforms related to governance and the market. Indonesian democracy has also given birth to what is called 'good governance' under democratic and accountable governance which corresponds to the transition to an economy based on free market governance and the rule of law.⁹ Even so,

⁶ Ann Harrison, "Globalization and Poverty An Introduction," (ed.) Ann Harrison, *Globalization and Poverty* (London-Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 3-4

⁷ J.B.Banawiratma, *Petruk dan Mea: Lakon Liberatif* (Kanisius: Yogyakarta, 2017), pp. 35-38

⁸ Seri Analisis Pembangunan Wilayah Provinsi Sumatera Utara tahun 2015, p. 34

⁹ Vedi R. Hadiz, "Corruption and Neo-liberal Reform: Markets and Predatory Power in Indonesia and Southeast Asia," Richard Robison [ed.] *The Neo-Liberal Revolution Forging the Market State* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 79

the strong influence of the authoritarian New Order regime which was full of corruption actually influenced the formation of new economic and political regimes in the regions. The most important and prominent powers raised under the New Order incubated in the Reformation era and formed a new framework of governance which perpetuated new alliances in a more fluid and democratic political environment. The era changed but the generation accustomed to the corrupt culture in the New Order era did not change. They can then permanently hold the control of leadership power both in the executive and in the legislature, including in the province of North Sumatra.

Since 1998 the financial decentralization program that transfers facilities financial from the central government to the provinces (local governments) leaves many public and administrative services to local officials. The central government only has the authority to make policies, to supervise and control the regions. This means that the development of the province is completely in the hands of local officials in the provinces, districts and sub-districts. Initially, administrative decentralization and financial governance were considered by many to be able to answer the problem of corruption and help government produce forms of government that were market friendly, participatory, transparent and accountable. However, the fact that happened on the ground instead of encouraging broad participatory politics, the decentralization of power has actually led to a worse decentralization of corruption in the regions, giving birth to new and unexpected forms of corruption. Decentralization has produced local officials who tend to be politically pro-power. This situation is very clear in North Sumatra. The activities and goals of most political parties are to seize power to achieve the maximum interest of the group. According to the records of the Indonesian Corruption Watch [ICW], North Sumatra Province is in the top 10 in the 2017 Corruption Case list by province. Recorded more than 40 cases of corruption that occurred in North Sumatra Province with state losses reaching Rp. 145 Billion.¹⁰

DEFORESTATION AND POVERTY

In the district of Tobasa, the presence of the Toba Pulp Lestari [TPL] pulp company, formerly known as Indo Rayon, has always been

¹⁰ [https://antikorupsi.org>default>files>t..](https://antikorupsi.org/default>files>t..) accessed at Monday, 4th Juni 2018

rejected by most of the surrounding Tapanuli people, especially those who live in the forest area and its surroundings. However, local indigenous peoples are powerless to face the power of entrepreneurs, government and local community leaders who are their lackeys. PT Toba Pulp Lestari has controlled not only very vast of industrial plantation forest (HTI) concession, but also use land and indigenous forest without socialization and consultation and the consent of the local indigenous people. PT Toba Pulp Lestari also logged incense (*kemenyan*) forest which is a forest that is claimed as customary forest. Another violation committed by PT Toba Pulp Lestari was the destruction of natural forests, as indicated by the presence of PT Toba Pulp Lestari expanding the logging area into protected areas.¹¹ The expansion of industrial plantations by PT Toba Pulp Lestari causes conflicts between communities and companies, between communities and become threat to life of communities.¹² The problem of forest encroachment for timber and paper business purposes involving companies is linked to a corrupt decentralized system of regional government and local figures who are pro-capital owners. The handover of power to manage forests from the central government to local governments has generated complex problems that resulted in huge losses on the part of local communities and also on the part of the environment itself. Local governments feel they must take the most of the benefits from forests to establish an adequate posture for regional development budgets, but often without sufficient consideration of the environmental and social consequences.¹³

Deforestation and illegal logging activities have caused big losses in North Sumatra. Deforestation in North Sumatra caused by the high global market demand for natural resource-based commodities such as timber, palm oil, pulp, mining and paper, has encouraged a reactive and opportunistic attitude of the government to issue many sectoral policies that are solely oriented towards increasing income, are exploitative and unsustainable. All of this has resulted in increased pressure on Indonesia's natural

¹¹ Muhamad Kosar, "Peran Perbankan Terhadap Ekspansi Industri dan Hutan Tanaman Industri PT Toba Pulp Lestari yang Menyebabkan Terjadinya Perusakan Lingkungan dan Maraknya Konflik," *Intip Hutan*, December 2015, pp. 12

¹² Muhamad Kosar, p. 14

¹³ Ida Aju Pradnja Resosudarmo, "Shifting Power to the Periphery: The Impact of Decentralisation on Forests and Forest People," Edward Aspinall and Greg Fealy [ed.] *Local Power and Politics in Indonesia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003), pp. 230-233

forests, forest degradation and deforestation.¹⁴ The bad impact of deforestation and illegal logging in North Sumatra clearly not only causes the process of impoverishment of the people living around the forest, but also has the potential for natural disasters such as flash floods and landslides, the threat of damage and loss of the ecosystem where orangutan species live in Sumatra¹⁵, there is global warming, including causing financial losses for local governments due to the policies of corrupt officials.

CHURCH BEING FOR BUILDING JUSTICE

Justice is an important thing in the discussion about multidimensional poverty. This multidimensional poverty is related to economic, social and political issues. Currently the world community is faced with the bad effects of the economic system of neoliberal capitalism, such as: poverty, unemployment, marginalization, inequality, oppression, low labor wages, high education and health costs, environmental damage and industrial waste that pollutes rivers, air and land, horizontal conflicts between groups with religious and cultural motives and so on. It is very important to radically re-interpret Luther's teaching on "justification," which is expected to regenerate a concrete praxis of justice in the midst of a world that is suffering, oppressed and poor. Moe-Lobeda¹⁶ explains that the theological balancing between Luther's two views of righteousness must be maintained, namely between righteousness in the sense of truth that God has given us: to love God and righteousness in the sense of God's justice which places us in a radical relationship with our neighbors: to love our neighbor. This kind of justification give us the transformative role and alternative culture to deal with an economic system based on money-interest-money-property which causes ego-centrism, exclusion, capital and profit orientation, objectification of humans as means of production, the consequences of which are severe poverty and suffering.

¹⁴ Mufti Fathul, dkk., *Deforestasi tanpa Henti "Potret Deforestasi di Sumatera Utara, Kalimantan Timur dan Maluku Utara,"* (Bogor: Forrest Watch Indonesia, 2018), p. 35

¹⁵ Serge Wich, dkk., "Orangutan dan Ekonomi Pengelolaan Hutan Lestari di Sumatera," *UNEP [United Nations Environment Programme]*, Nairobi-Kenya, 2011, p. 13

¹⁶ Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda, "Re-Radicalizing Justification," Ulrich Duchrow; Carsten Jochum-Bortfeld (eds.), *Liberation towards Justice* (Munster: LIT VERLAG, 2015), pp. 239-258

‘The tyrannical regime of an infinite spirit’ of the hegemonic economy of financial capitalism must be uprooted from the life of indigenous people,¹⁷ because it can damage relationship between humans, between humans and natural environment. Interpersonal relations should not be based on ‘*homo oeconomicus*’ culture that measure all relations according to profit and financial calculations which pose a very dangerous threat to the survival of humans and the universe.¹⁸ “The myth of global market as the only way to save the world”¹⁹ have to be resisted by human’s communities through encouraging the birth of an alternative economic culture that is aware of and respects the importance of solidarity and just relations in societies. All religious people must affirm that economic activity cannot be separated from religious aspect of human life. It is clearly believed that economy functions for maintaining life of human beings and preservation of the universe. Economy being for life of all. Economy for life is possible if the religious values of religions concerning the human nature as transcendent as well as immanent are developed in a balanced manner.²⁰ We believed that our God is God of Liberation who restores and reconcile damaged relations between humans. But also He is God of Israel – the father of Jesus Christ - who opposes the political economy of Tyrannical Empire.²¹ God’s justice in the true sense is justice which is relational and has a communal dimension. God’s justice is therefore a force that protects and builds community together. The fellowship of God with His creation, humanity and especially with His chosen people is embodied in the concept of the Covenant. Flowing from this understanding, the conclusion was born that God also hopes that all humans connect themselves with all creation, with other people and with their communities in fair and honest relationships, respect for each other and build common rights.²²

¹⁷ See. Daniel C. Beros, “Justice by Faith and Eco-Justice,” Louk Andrianos (ed.), *Kairos for Creation: Confessing Hope for the Earth* (Wuppertal: Feodus Verlag, 2019), pp.91-92

¹⁸ B. Herry – Priyono, “Bangsa dalam Tegangan Lokal – Global,” *Diskursus: Vol. 2 No. 2* (Jakarta: STF Driyarkara, 2003), pp. 134-135

¹⁹ Ulrich Duchrow, Franz J. Hinkelammert, *Transcending Greedy Money. Interreligious Solidarity for Just Relations* (New York: Pargrave Macmillan, 2012), pp.14, 17

²⁰ Ulrich Duchrow, Franz J. Hinkelammert, *Transcending..* pp.44-90

²¹ Ulrich Duchrow, “Political and Economic Wellbeing and Justice: A Global View,” - *Studies Christian Ethics: Political Ethics - Justice and Wellbeing in Political Society: Vol.3 No.1* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), pp. 62-63

²² Ulrich Duchrow, Gerhard Liedke, *Shalom: Biblical Perspectives on Creation, Justice & Peace*

Justice in the ethics of the common good contains lacerative element that can be seen in the act of liberating the poor from oppression, injustice, poverty and slavery. And various comprehensive service programs will reach them well if these programs are based on a number of critical analyses and understandings of the big problems from the perspective and context of their lives who experience these problems in a concrete manner.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is crucial to call for all the churches in North Sumatra to concern not only with their internal institutional matters and maintaining good relations with the government, but more actively stand for resistance to the corrupt culture that has penetrated the North Sumatra community. It is the function of the Churches in local and national to always demand the responsibility of the government to take side of the poor, oppressed and marginalized by issuing government policies that make them live in welfare and healthy environment. In Toba Samosir District, HKBP have to strengthen her position as a critical and transformative church that always struggle for and with the poor people. At the same time HKBP must protest against the company's corruptive behavior that dehumanize poor people. The church especially HKBP should take a critical and transformative position to always speak out prophetically the importance of justice, peace and the integrity of creation; to always criticize government policies that are unfair and detrimental to the poor; to always provide assistance and empowerment to the poor that they have to rise from their poverty. The young political candidates who will later take lead in the future must receive Christian political education from the church. In ecological sector, the churches in North Sumatra are challenged to answer the problems of environmental degradation and marginalized communities as victims due to the actions of irresponsible deforestation of timber and paper companies.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rev. Dr. Jordan Humala Pakpahan, M.Th is a pastor from Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP). He was born in Sidamanik, December 23th, 1974. He is married with Melda Lolita Friska Pangaribuan, S.Pd and they have three children: Karin Grace Airene Pakpahan 11 years old, Yonatan Parolan Aireno Pakpahan 9 years old, Nissa Pauli Eukaristi Pakpahan 5 years old. He studied in Sekolah Tinggi Teologi HKBP Pematangsiantar in 1993-1998 for his Bachelor of Theology and then continued studying in the same university for his Magister of Theology in Sekolah Tinggi Teologi HKBP Pematangsiantar in 2010-2013. In 2017 - 2021 he got his Doctoral of Theology in Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana (UKDW) Yogyakarta. dann. pakpahan23@gmail.com.



BOOK REVIEW

Title : *Post-Pandemic Churches Embracing Life*
(*Gereja Pasca Pandemi Merengkuh Kehidupan*)
Author : Joas Adiprasetya
Publisher : STFT Jakarta dan BPK Gunung Mulia, Jakarta
Edition/Pub. Year : 2nd/2021
Reviewer : Pdt. Chlaodhius Budhianto

The book is a small book. With a total thickness of 81 pages only. The main arguments are organized over 63 pages and divided into 5 chapters. Even so, it is a book with high academic value. Initially this book was the text for an inauguration speech of the position of Professor of Theology, the highest position in the academic world, held by the author in the Jakarta College for Theology and Philosophy (Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Teologi Jakarta).

This book is the author's attempt to construct a contextual ecclesiology, more precisely an ecclesiology that is relevant to post-COVID19-pandemic life and beyond (p. vii). Even though he is pessimistic regards the end of the pandemic, while also feeling lost with the situation that will arise after the pandemic, the author does not lose his hope for the future. Humanity's fragility in facing COVID-19 (p. vii) and their limitations in seeing the future (p. 33) becomes the centre of the author's concerns regards faith in constructing his contextual ecclesiology.

Interestingly, the author does not offer church models of the past as a solution for the COVID pandemic. Even so churches have often presented themselves anew in facing the pandemic (p. 35 - 37), these models of church attendance have not been taken and offered as a "cure" for the church's attendance during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Instead of following, the author has constructed a new ecclesiological model.

Like developing a building, the introduction of the book represents the stage where the author is preparing the land for his ecclesiological building. This chapter explores the use of the term of fragility which has become a *trending topic* in the academic world since the 1990s. Fragility is then developed as a “theological category, even becoming a *locus theologicus*, for the development of ecclesiology during the pandemic and for the post-pandemic times,” (p. 4).

In chapters 1 and 2 the author continues the process of building the foundation of his ecclesiology. The wealth of philosophical knowledge (chapter 1) and theological knowledge (chapter 2) are woven in such a way that provides a strong ecclesiological foundation. From the philosophical world, the author discusses the concept of fragility with feminist philosopher: Judith Butler. This discussion assists the author to clarify the concept of fragility into three: inherent fragility, situational fragility, and pathogenic fragility (p. 8). At the end of the discussion with Butler, the author summarizes that fragility is an inherent condition of humans who continually display ethics. Fragility invites every human to unite and develop the praxis of liberation for all those who are equally fragile.

In the second chapter, the author brings the results of his philosophical discussion into the theological discussion. The Christian and Trinitarian anthropological perspective is used by the author to prove that inherent fragility is not necessarily negative. Although contributing to the expansion of sin, fragility is not a consequence of sin. Fragility should be embraced, maintained, and even celebrated as a noble human value (p. 16, 30 – 31). Research into the thoughts of fragility theologians including Sturla J. Stålsett, William C. Placher, David Jensen, John D. Zizioulas, and many others, provides the author with two key grounds in asserting his point. *Firstly*, inherent fragility is a gift of creation. Fragility is present through humans when the frail God (*deus vulnerabilis*) created humanity in His image (p. 16). Through this event, humans have received the identity known as “*homo vulnerabilis*” (fragile human). *Secondly*, The Trinitarian God, based on William C. Placher’s understanding of fragility as the “perfection of loving freedom,” the author sees that fragility is sourced within the Trinitarian God himself. The Trinitarian God is a God of love. Because of his Love, God always wishes to develop relations with others, be it with other divine entity within the Trinity, and his creations. It is this desire to

develop relations based on love that makes God a frail God (*Deus vulnerabilis*). “Those who relate with others, must be willing to live in fragility (17). God’s fragility is made real in Christ who was willing to endure suffering to bring God’s love and grace to creation. Christ then became the intermediary who allows for creation to receive a participatory space in God’s fellowship. Christ’s presence is thus not to negate fragility. His presence actually “embraces fragility and makes it the true face of God to creation,” (p.25) Aside from being done by Christ, embracing fragility is also done by the Holy Spirit who is present by permeating into creation and beautifying it. Through these two hands of God, Christ, and The Holy Spirit, creation’s fragility is appreciated, cared for, and restored (26). The Church as a group of fragile person(s), in turn becomes a fragile community that is embraced by Christ and The Holy Spirit.

After the land has been prepared and the foundation laid, the process of constructing the ecclesiological building begins. The process is done in chapters 3 and 4. As first step, the author reflects on the pandemic as a crisis, an event that forces the Church to take an attitude for the best or the worst. Crises caused by Pandemics have faced the Church many times; in the early times of Christianity as recorded in Acts 11:26-30, the plague of Justinian in 541-542 and the *Black Death* pandemic in 1347 – 1351. When dealing with these various pandemics, the church successfully took the right stance, so that the church continued to grow. Loyalty to the identity of the Mission’s Community, sensitivity to those that are fragile and most effected, and the willingness to fight for the fellowships which tended to their communities, has become key for the success of churches. It is a pity that, modern churches, especially Indonesian churches, do not take wisdom from this history. Consequently, the church has failed when faced with the COVID-19 pandemic. This failure is made worse with the church’s inability to “think about the ecclesiological movement and their pre-pandemic dependence on ecclesiological governance which is more intimately connected with the business world,” (p. 41).

The author sees the management of churches which shares business tendencies through orderly church governance and the process of preparing church activities. In general, the process of developing church programs is preceded by the development of long-term visions and missions. The underlying assumption is the belief that the church can predict the future. In the next

stage, vision and mission are elaborated on a series of medium-term strategies which are then implemented in annual programs. Indicators of achieving the vision and mission are also determined. The business-based ecclesiological governance is made even more complete when the *ABC (Attendance, Building, and Cash) Criteria* is implemented as a measure of success or failure of the church. When the pandemic forced most churches to move their space to cyberspace, this governance was not changed. Churches only modified their strategies slightly. Churches no longer use the *ABC Criteria*, rather *FLV (Followers, Likes, Viewers)*.

After performing an autopsy on the failure of the church, in the fourth chapter, the author offers his ecclesiological idea that is a reflective church. Likened to a building, a reflective church is a church that is based upon fragility, possessing 3 pillars of virtue (*unlearning, lament, virtue*) and has the roof of the Kingdom of God. Consistently, the author defines the reflective church as a church that survives by walking; walking slowly forward armed with Christian virtue; and by living that virtue, he will meet the fragile faces of the oppressors (viii). The ultimate goal of the pilgrim is not the continuation of his (church) greatness and majesty, but the kingdom of God. As Jesus came to announce the Kingdom of God, not to establish churches (p. 45 – 45, 51).

This book can be said to be proof of the author's expertise as a theologian. The vast treasures of the theological and philosophical knowledge are selectively taken and rewoven in a coherent and systematic way. The arguments are flowed in a smooth way, so as creating a nice and easy read. The large amounts of quotes and theological terms in foreign languages, indicates that this book is directed for a reading community that is more "literate" of theology and are familiar with foreign languages. However, these difficulties need not be exaggerated. The author has anticipated such a thing and has thus prepared translations or explanations on the quotes or foreign terms that he has used, so that readers from other segments may enjoy and understand this book.

Regardless of the presentation, the book represents a work that is very valuable and needs to be read by church leaders and laypeople alike. The ecclesiology that is being offered is one that is truly a contextual ecclesiology, which was not only born during a pandemic but also became an answer to the church's indecision in presenting itself in the middle of a pandemic. Even though it is

tied to the context that gave birth, that is the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia, the ecclesiology that is offered in this book possesses universal significance. Because isn't disaster, whether pandemic or not, whether illness or natural disaster, a reality which keeps repeating itself in human life?

In addition, I would like to express my opinion on the ecclesiological ideas that have been offered by the author. This opinion was born from my experience and observations, as a pastor of a congregation in the villages, where the community and members still hold strongly the values of the village community, which is different from the author's position, which is that of an academic, and a pastor of congregation within the metropolitan, Jakarta. The differences in location will certainly lead to different experiences and observations regards the COVID-19 pandemic.

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic has certainly been felt by members of the community and members of the congregation. They have heard, seen, and felt personally the fragility of life caused by COVID-19. However, they do not see COVID-19 and the effects excessively. Most residents see the COVID-19 pandemic as an event that is shocking but not frightening. Not a few views COVID-19 as a dangerous playmate, so they boldly say, "better to die of COVID-19, than to die in fear at home."

This understanding has grown in the village community, not because they don't care about their own safety and that of others. They still care. This understanding has been born from the reality that fragility is a daily reality for the village community. They have not felt life's fragility just once or twice. Through decades, they have experienced marginalization politically and economically. Recent climate change and the disruption towards the working world of rural communities (agriculture), has made the fragility of rural communities ever more acute. It is this "appreciation" towards fragility that has made the rural communities able to survive in the face of COVID-19. In addition, their relationship with nature, that is through agriculture, also becomes a source of comfort and hope during the pandemic. When other community groups experience a lot of stress as a result of the #dirumahsaja (#stayathome) situation, while also facing difficulties in providing their daily needs, rural communities can calmly continue with their lives, in fact showing solidarity with others that are in need. Even though they themselves find it difficult to get cash, this does not stop them in realizing

solidarity with others. They are willing to give their agricultural products with victims of the pandemic.

This experience shows the importance of the agricultural world (read: the environment) in accompanying the shepherding of the rural community and village congregations in the pandemic. Unfortunately, this aspect has not been touched at all by the author. The reflective church is more anthropocentric. In fact, in addition to supporting the shepherding of man in the middle of the pandemic, the environment has also been a victim of COVID-19 and its handling. The handling and prevention of COVID-19 has led to an increase of waste, including medical waste, personal protective equipment waste (masks and gloves), and other wastes generated by the increase of online shopping (grocery wrappers). That the environment has become a victim of COVID-19, thus post-pandemic church discourse cannot ignore environmental issues. Anthropocentrism in the reflective church, needs to be expanded to creation-centric.

Apart from the notes above, this book is a very important book. Through this book, the author not only provides a final answer, that is a reflective church as contextual ecclesiology for the COVID-19 pandemic, but also provides methodological instructions on developing contextual ecclesiology. With these clues, the reader will be assisted in developing their own contextual ecclesiology.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rev. Chlaodhius Budhianto was born in 1979. He studied Theology at Abdiel Ungaran at Theology College in 2005 and then continue to study Socio-religion in Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana- Salatiga in 2008. He had an experience to be a participant of Rural Leadership Training in Asia Rural Institute, Japan in 2018. Currently, He is a pastor in Gereja Kristen Jawa Tengah Utara Sumunar. He is lecturing Religions,

Contextual Theology, Pancasila, Theology itself and Hermeneutics at Theology College in Sangkakala-Getasan. Apart from being an academic and pastor, he is also an integrated organic farmer and as a facilitator of integrated farming group: Surga Farm.



Address: Regional Office Asia
Jl. Pdt. J. Wismar Saragih, Bane, Kec. Siantar Utara,
Kota Pematangsiantar, 21142 North Sumatra, Indonesia
Phone: +62 622 7357681
AsiaRegional@vemission.org
www.vemission.org