



Mission Sparks

Academic Journal of Asia Region

January 2023

13th Edition

"RELIGIONS AND POST-PANDEMIC COVID-19"





Mission Sparks

Academic Journal of Asia Region

MISSION SPARKS:
Academic Journal of Asia Region

EDITORIAL BOARD

Dr. Dyah Ayu Krismawati (Chief Editor)

Dr. Simon Chau

Dr. Jeaneth Fallor

Dr. Uwe Hummel

Dr. Benny Sinaga

Kinurung Maleh Maden, D.Th.

Drs. Petrus Sugito, M.M.

PRODUCTION AND ASSISTANCE TEAM

Petrus Sugito (Coordinator)

Yuli Gulö (Finance and Administration)

Julian Tampubolon (Production and Distribution)

Ridho Sunelju Haholongan Simamora (Editor and Layout)

Address:

UEM Regional Office Asia

Jl. Pdt. J. Wismar Saragih, Bane, Kec. Siantar Utara,
Kota Pematang Siantar, 21142 North Sumatra, Indonesia

Phone: +62 622 7357681

asiaregional@vemission.org / www.vemission.org

UEM Mission Sparks: Academic Journal of Asia Region is published twice a year
in January - May and June - December.

Cost (per copy): In Indonesia - IDR.50,000.00

For subscription, please send email to: asiaregional@vemission.org

Attn: Yuli Gulö

Payments should be made through fund transfer: BNI (Bank Negara Indonesia)

Account name : UEM ASIA

Account Number : 0128002447

Note: Payment for Mission Sparks Journal





TABLE OF CONTENT

1. EDITORIAL NOTE (Dr. Dyah Ayu Krismawati).....	v
2. HERALDING THE FULL LIFE OUR EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY IN THE POST-PANDEMIC WORLD (Rev. Ferdinand A. Anno)	1
3. “RECOVER TOGETHER, RECOVER STRONGER” TOWARDS GLOBAL JUSTICE IN THE POST PANDEMIC COVID 19 - THE CALLING OF THE CHURCH (Rev. Dr. Jenny Purba).....	13
4. CHURCH AND POPULAR CULTURE: TOWARD THE DIGITAL ECCLESIOLOGY IN RESPONSES TO THE PANDEMIC AND POST- PANDEMIC COVID-19 (Rev. Dr. Norita Novalina Sembiring)	23
5. CHURCH AND POST-PANDEMIC COVID-19: SPIRITUALITY AND E-WORSHIP FROM YOUTH PERSPECTIVE (Windvy YU Kwan Ching)	42
6. THE ROLE OF RELIGION TO OVERCOME CLIMATE CHANGE PRESENTED AT JEW-CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM CONFERENCE (JCM), PADANGSIDEMPUAN, NORTH SUMATRA, AUGUST 7-15, 2022 (Marko Mahin).....	45
7. ISLAM AND CLIMATE CHANGE: KHAL ³ FAH AND THE MANDATE OF SAVING THE ENVIRONMENT (Faisal Riza)	56
8. KEARIFAN LOKAL - MODAL MODERASI BERAGAMA DI BUMI ANGKOLA (Agustina Damanik)	70
9. LOCAL WISDOM - AN ASSET OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN THE LAND OF ANGKOLA (Agustina Damanik)	77



EDITORIAL NOTE

Dear Readers,

The Mission Sparks 13th edition is brought to you in the beginning of New Year 2023 with the theme “**Religions and Post Pandemic Covid-19.**” The Pandemic Covid-19 is still a concern since the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic still affect many aspects of our life. The question that this edition tries to explore is how religious people respond to the the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and how religions play a role in the real context of their adherents and society.

Related to this, writers from various backgrounds presented various thoughts:

Ferdinand Anno in his writing presented the vision of a whole-person education or a full-live for all. Taking the example of UCCP’s educational ministry and considered the globalization of education, regional integration in the ASEAN region, digitization or the “fourth industrial revolution”, pandemic and new normal, he raised and explored a question on where the faith-based or Protestant schools in that landscape are.

Another author, **Jenny Purba**, took the idea from the slogan of the Indonesian presidency of the G20, “Recover Together, Recover Stronger” to emphasize the importance of the role of the Church in fulfilling its calling to participate in realizing global justice after the Covid-19 pandemic. To be able to fulfill this call and role, Jenni suggested that churches should continue to build networks with all stakeholders. Church encounters that are willing and able to work together with all stakeholders will realize the expected recovery and transformations.

Norita Novalina Sembiring raised the topic about church and popular culture. According to her, theology must pay attention to the Covid-19 pandemic and digitalization. Digital ecclesiology is needed to provide space for a reinterpretation of the Church that is relevant

and responsive. Therefore, the Church is challenged to re-narrate its mission during the pandemic and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

The topic of the importance of utilizing digital media was also raised by **Kwan Ching Yu**. He took the theme Spirituality and E-Worship which emphasized the importance of the Church to look back at the meaning of faith in the new normal, after the pandemic Covid-19. According to him, the Church must become an organic Church, a Church that understands and responds to social challenges.

Marko Mahin in his article presented the theme about the role of religion to overcome climate change. According to him, religion has a positive side that can contribute a lot to climate change prevention, but also a negative side if religious people understand climate change as God's will that cannot be prevented. He proposed the importance of understanding religion as a source of hope so that it can encourage the active participation of its adherents to prevent climate change.

From a Muslim perspective, **Faisal Riza** elaborated the role of Islam in providing guidance and rules in protecting and utilizing nature. He showed various doctrines in the Qur'an and Hadith that guide and regulate how to utilize and protect nature. Thus, he emphasized that Islam is not only a religion that teaches about rituals of worship, but also a religion that pays attention to the nature conservation.

Last, **Agustina Damanik** wrote about the contribution of local practices in the Batak tradition to community and interfaith relations. According to her, local wisdom contains noble values that are very important for building a harmonious life in the diverse society.

Enjoy reading!

Dr. Dyah Ayu Krismawati
Chief Editor



HERALDING THE FULL LIFE

Our Educational Ministry in the Post-Pandemic World

Rev. Ferdinand A. Anno

In the Philippines, most of the Protestant schools under the Church-Related Educational Action Toward Empowerment (CREATE)-UCCP umbrella have adopted the UCCP theme for the ecclesiastical year, “Heralding the Full Life” and made it their educational agenda.” This thematic emphasis revisits the *raison d’etre* of CREATE-UCCP schools, i.e., mission schools committed to bringing the good news of the full life to the communities during the country’s most critical times.

The CREATE schools group was amply named CREATE during its establishment in 1987 given the “creative” nature and thrust of the work that is entrusted to the educational ministry of the united churches. CREATE member school or not, the educational ministry of the church in the post-pandemic world is about creation or, more correctly, co-creation.

“Create” is the very first act of God in the Judaeo-Christian scriptures. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” (Gen. 1:1)

Appropriated in the educational ministry of the church, the above mythos of the Judaeo-Christian faith suggests (1) that the educational ministry of CREATE-UCCP, being a “creation” of creative creators, must be among the firsts in the agenda of the church; (2) that CREATE is about being aligned to the creative designs of the Creator God or, in more corporeal terms, aligned to the mission-vision of the church; and (3) that CREATE is about our schools becoming heralds of the new and full life and, thus, generators of

hope and empowerment during these critical times of rebuilding and reconstruction.

THE EXILIC CHAOS OF QUARANTINED LIVING

In the beginning, was chaos. The earth was without form and void and darkness is on the face of the deep. Exegetically, in its biblical context, this primeval chaos has to do with the exilic experience of the ancient Israelites, the proud “people of God.”¹ There was the mass experience of uprootment, rootlessness, identity crisis, economic displacement, and political marginalization. This primeval chaos is also described in both popular literature and imagination as the abyss where not a sign or spark of life is present. In sum, it was a radically disempowering historical situation; thus the word “create” is, in its biblical setting, about the hopes for and creation of a new historical reality.

The CREATE school’s “heralding of the full life” in the post-pandemic world at once pursues the missional agenda of the UCCP during this quadrennium, 2022–2026: “***Rebuilding and Restoring with Hope.***” How do the church schools help in the work of rebuilding and restoring life toward fullness during and after the global Covid-19 pandemic?

The truth of the matter is that long before the pandemic, human society is already afflicted by pandemics and social viruses. On the global front, the pandemic of inequity as evidenced by the scandalous gap between the global north and the global south has been making the lives of billions miserable. The pandemic of ecological injustice that has now brought us to a climate emergency status is increasingly making this planet inhabitable; and the pandemic of war keeps popping out from various regions of the planet where Ukraine is only the most recent. The fact that some hotspots are not as highlighted as Ukraine, like the ones in Yemen and Palestine, or even Myanmar and Papua in Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific only magnifies and aggravates the pestering problem of racism. In the Philippine scene, the very reason why the mass of

¹ Based primarily on biblical scholarship’s “documentary hypothesis” propounded by Julius Wellhausen’s 1876–1878 series on the Pentateuch and the history of ancient Israel; a theory that became popular in basic Old Testament studies textbooks and helped indirectly if not directly in constructing a story that was later contributory to the development of narrative theology.

underclass Filipinos are all yearning for a political messiah to the point of becoming fanatics about populist authoritarian leaders is because of the social viruses that continue to afflict the national community to its core. It turns out however, that even temporal messiah are as exhausted and disempowered in the face of the social virus that has burrowed deep into our system, culture, moral compass, rational faculties, and spirituality.

Our own experience of disempowerment was further magnified and amplified by the global crisis brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. The massive economic and social dislocation of most of the world's population and the chaotic political situation that the confusion sired gave the modern world its version of the primeval chaos in our bible's book of beginnings.

These are critical times, indeed. Or, in the language of the Bible, "We live at a time when our world is without form and void, and that darkness is on the face of the deep." But was not the paschal story that we celebrate in the Word and the Eucharist inclusive of the story of Jesus, the Christ, descending into the bottomless pit of Hades? Was there not an eight-day, the day of Christ's rising?

THE GOSPEL OF THE "EIGHT/FIRST DAY"

On the eighth day, everything is made possible. That which we think is simply not possible is made possible.

There is an eighth day to the story of this global pandemic, and it is about our rising and becoming whole again. There is the eighth day to our quests for a life better than the present—and it is about the hope that it can happen. Not even the enticing promise of a technologically innovative "new normal" could prevent us from hoping that something qualitatively new and better can come about.

The eighth day is at once the first day, the commencement day. The first day is a creative day not unlike the primal first day of creation. When they started celebrating the first day of the week as the eighth day, the early Christians signaled that God's new creation had just begun. What everyone thought was the end was the beginning!

It was the beginning of anew chapter in the life of Jesus's disciples and followers. In some accounts of the resurrection, it was the beginning of spiritual nourishment for the disciples who communed and were energized a new in body and spirit by the risen Christ. The "miracle" of the "eighth-as-the-first day" includes our

empowerment to begin our lives anew as persons in some personal circumstance and predicament as families, as communities, as a people; and to begin anew in our common work of bringing about that new life, that new world, and that new historical and spatial reality.

The global pandemic and the many social and spiritual viruses that continue to afflict us may be draining us spiritually and physically, and there may not be that many signs of us learning lessons from our collective experience of the pandemic. Nevertheless, the resurrection of Jesus brings to us the good news of the “eighth-as-the-first day;” and its gospel leads us beyond the expanse of our temporal hopes and expectations; that the eighth day surpasses the imaginations of our cynical moves toward recovery; that a qualitatively new life beyond the “new normal” is possible; and that we are given the eighth-day, the day of resurrection, the first day of the week, to start anew in co-creating a new and better life for all.

The eighth day heralds the good news: Christ has risen from the pit of Hades! “Christ is risen, indeed” meaning, our Creator God is still at work prompting us to herald the good news that God continues to CREATE. We are participants in the creative work of God. This is what the *missio ecclesiae* are about. It is the church’s participation in the *missio Dei*.

OF *MISSIO ECCLESIAE* AND OUR EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY IN THE POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

To create in the CREATE group of schools context is about being aligned to the *Missio Dei* through our participation in the *missio ecclesiae*, or in the work of the Body of Christ. When the UCCP schools organized themselves into the CREATE in the direction of the missional agenda to empower peoples and communities thru educational ministry, the schools committed to align themselves and their collective work to the creative work of God.

There are so many forces or gravitational forces that could pull the schools away from this ministry orientation. Our desire to be “like the other nations” or desire to be “like the Ivy League schools” is not simply a wish. It is a requirement and an imperative. Failing to be like the other schools would make us extinct as a species. We need to navigate through the rough waters of globalizing education. The globalization of education, regional integration in the ASEAN region, digitization, or the “fourth industrial revolution” is truly

revolutionizing the way we witness on the education front. The ethos of today's educational industry could easily push us out of our orbit. The pandemic and the new normal are other challenges that could easily lure us into treading the way of other nations.

Where are the faith-based or Protestant [like CREATE-UCCP] schools in this landscape?

The Protestant schools are spread all over a vast spectrum of institutional capability and development. Some are now riding what the old futurists name the "third wave."² Some are still struggling to survive the first and second waves, some are somewhere in between, either lost or still afloat, and some are thriving. Most of the CREATE schools are somewhere between afloat and thriving at this point.

While Protestants schools can be "like the other nations," meaning, while we can join the globalization bandwagon, we need to be more creative in the way we ride the third wave, now called "the fourth industrial revolution."³ We need to be like the surfer who could ride the board and sway with grace and beauty through the orderly violence of an angry sea.

The closest to this analogy in our sacred scriptures is Moses' parting of the sea to allow the safe passage of God's people, and the second is Jesus' saying to the angry sea "peace be still," calming his disciples from their fears. We need both the staff of Moses and the faith of Jesus Christ as we navigate through our tumultuous waters. These two are some of the core ingredients that make an empowering educational action: we have the faith, and our schools are established by faith that peoples and communities can be empowered in conformity with God's design for God's creation; and that we have the staff, meaning, the resources that we need in our educational work toward empowerment. All our ventures must be geared towards this goal of empowering people and communities. Anything less is a failure that we need to rise from.

Historically, in the Philippines, Protestant schools were established during and in the aftermath of the Filipino-American war. That war was brutal and killed the Filipinos' hopes for freedom

² See Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (New York: Bantam Books, 1980); Richard Schwenk, *Riding the Third Wave: Into the Third Millenium* (Michigan: SEED Center, 1991).

³ Kalus Schwab, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution: what it means and how to respond* (Jan 24, 2016) *The Fourth Industrial Revolution: what it means and how to respond* | World Economic Forum (weforum.org) (last retrieved 11.25.22).

and national independence. Where revolutionary strategists and tacticians failed, the schools more than made up in the educational front, Protestant schools included. While these schools were used by American colonial power to win the hearts and minds of its colonial subjects, the seeds of freedom and liberating wisdom have been sown. The “miseducation” of the Filipinos under colonial tutelage was not total. The hope that came with mass education grew bigger than the limited social imaginations of the colonized subjects. The perspective of national independence and social justice was like the wheat that grew with the grasses. This, too, was the story of Protestant schools that were organized in 1987 as CREATE-UCCP schools. CREATE was established in the aftermath of the relatively peaceful 1986 “people power” upheaval that ousted the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos (1972-1986). The organization served as the Protestant schools’ response to call for national rebuilding and democratization.

Culturally, educational institutions are cultural formators, meaning, they help form the souls of nations and civilizations. Likewise, faith-based schools can make or unmake “civilizations” on both the domestic and global fronts. That’s how vast and potent the impact and influence of faith-based schools are, big or small. The Abra Mountain Development Education Center (AMDEC), for example, maybe a small school struggling to make it through the angry sea, but AMDEC’s traditional and current witness is what is needed for the planet to survive. A school for indigenous communities, AMDEC stood out in terms of celebrating both indigenous and Christian identities in very creative ways. The truth of the matter is that indigenous spiritualities are what our present world need to survive. The prophet Ezekiel is very clear about this: God has reminded us how we need the four winds of the earth to complete the rebuilding and restoration of our common life (Ez. 40:20). AMDEC, in this respect, is as significant as Silliman University, or Southern Christian College, or Maasin College, or Brokenshire College, and the bigger CREATE-UCCP member schools.

More importantly, schools generally serve as generators of hope in history both in their ancient and contemporary forms. By teaching communities “how the bones and flesh can come together” [in the language of ancient Hebrew prophets]; “how human living can be animated by the earth, water, and sky”; and by heralding an alternative social vision; and how this social vision energizes people

into hoping that a world better than the present is possible, schools can live true to their mandate as beacons of hope.

In the regime of the old [and new normal], schools are being re-oriented toward becoming production centers, primarily, of bolts and knots for the machines of production. While responsive to the needs of the glo-cal market, Christian schools are more than the school of and for the profiteers. Christian schools are birthing centers, “seedbeds,” and “nurseries” for human beings who image God and are imbibed with a social vision that celebrates the full life. This is what makes Christian schools beacons of hope in our contemporary world. We do not simply serve as suppliers for the market. We need to supply the market with people who are ready and equipped to transform and humanize the market. This is the contribution of CREATE-UCCP schools to the rebuilding and restoration of the earth community towards the full life.

Beyond CREATE-UCCP, heralding the full life is foremost in every educational institution’s agenda:

HERALDING THE FULL LIFE: OUR EDUCATIONAL AGENDA

After our harrowing experience of the global pandemic, the vision of full life, more than ever, continues to inform, inspire and nourish our perspectives on what whole-person education is about. It is about the full life. The full life is our agenda.

The vision of the full life is an age-old quest for humanity. This is present in the dreaming and cosmo-visioning of ancient communities, in the imaginations of every know religion, in the philosophical reflection of sages and philosophers, and in the many social and scientific revolutions that transpired and are happening in our contemporary world.

In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the full life is the realization of shalom, and shalom is the sum of interhuman justice, material satisfaction, and spiritual fulfillment.

However universal the vision of the full life is, not all agree on how the full life should be distributed and appropriated. This is the sad story of humanity. In a popular religious metaphor, the human aspired to become like God and cut the cord that binds him or her to his/her siblings. Humanity, as a result, was divided between the strong and the weak, the haves and the have-nots, the powerful and the powerless, the rich and the poor. The full life was then

appropriated to mean the state of living within the upper tip of a social pyramid beyond the access and experience of the mass of humanity. This became the order of life. What is true in the human commune is also true in the wider ecological order. The human put himself/herself atop the ecological pyramid and had his/her dominion destroy the web of life leaving the earth mortally wounded and gasping for breath. It is primarily due to this ecological injustice that we are experiencing these days the fury of climate change and global warming.

The global community has been forcibly quarantined by the Covid-19 pandemic for almost two years. It was the worst of times for those who are not in the zones of war. But what further pushed many communities to cynicism, fear, and despair is the infodemic that is at its most toxic during this period. This infodemic is vicious in that truth and science became the immediate casualty. We are seeing today how pseudoscience is invading us and contributing to our mismanagement of the crises, thus unnecessarily prolonging our difficult situation. The lament of educators engaged in the educational ministry is that the years they have spent studying, teaching, researching, writing, publishing, and sharing ideas, practices, and critical information in the service of the education sector's emancipatory agenda are now easily undermined. The products of their labors and contributions are not only unappreciated but are summarily and capriciously dismissed as simply a buzz among the deafening buzzes of swarms of glorified "Maritesses."⁴

It is extremely disheartening when the lifetime work and commitment of educational institutions are casually distorted, twisted, and erased while lies and half-truths are peddled as truth on social media. This has become more disturbing and enraging in recent years when even the learned and highly credentialed consent to this all-out assault and undermining of well-researched and well-established historical facts. It is the irony of all ironies that, in the age of social media when communication, information, and transportation technologies are revolutionizing toward the zenith of our "fourth industrial" imagination, truth and real, deep connectedness are the casualties. "Lies laced with anger and hate" as the popular saying goes, are "spreading faster than boring facts." Contrary to the common perception that the technological revolution and its social media aspect promote social connection and cohesion,

⁴ i.e., popular/street name for gossipers/rumor mills.

indicators point to fragmentation in the global commune. What is happening on social media is happening in our day-to-day lives. The violence that we witness online is being replicated in real-world violence even as real violence is being played out in social media. This is a vicious cycle that goes with whatever good is heralded by current technological and scientific innovations.

In the regime of the “new normal,” the highly contagious virus of half-truths and lies gets “normalized” and becomes an organic part of us. Truth is the casualty when lies and half-truths got normalized. The educators’ fear of people becoming impervious to facts has come to pass. “Without truth,” says the Nobel Peace Prize awardee, Maria Ressa, “we cannot have trust. [And] without trust, we have no shared reality, and it becomes impossible to deal with our world’s existential problems.”⁵ In this situation, whatever are our experiments on democratic reordering crumble from within and popular authoritarian regimes fill in the vacuum. Indicators pointing to this reality are alarming and we do not need to go far to sense this. When not addressed in due time and lies and half-truths become the staple in the regime of the “new normal,” our society’s very foundation crumbles bottom up.

We were witnesses to the resilience and radical hoping of the mass of our population but resilience is not enough. Our resilience must translate into hope, and our hope into action. We need to metamorphose into something new. We are now at the end of our cocooning. For some two years, we were forced to cocoon, and cocoon we did. In the life rite of butterflies and moths, cocooning means transformation: the shedding off of our old selves and the embracing of a new one. We were in a liminal zone and just now, on the threshold of something new. Not quite the new normal but post-new normal. The new normal is wanting. In the education setting, the new normal is simply re-tooling and re-skilling in the service of the social mess that was the old normal. In contrast, the post-new normal perspective pushes for the more transformative agenda of our educational work—in achieving something beyond the limited imaginations of the architects of our social madness.

Should not this be the paradigm of our educational witness? To look for ways to overcome the social madness that contributed to

⁵ <https://www.rappler.com/voices/thought-leaders/opinion-maria-ressa-unesco-world-press-freedom-prize-speech/> (Last retrieved 11.25.2022).

our being on edge of civilizational collapse? We need to know how to extricate ourselves from the social madness that is increasingly crippling us. We need science in every step we make and take toward our complete physical, social, and spiritual healing. Mass paranoia, mass hypnosis, and religious agitation must give way to a more scientific understanding and rational discernment of the signs of the times. The relationship between our education work to the social vision of Shalom or the full life is like a jigsaw puzzle. We and our work are some of these jigsaw pieces. We may not see the immediate relevance of our work but it is part of a grand design towards effecting the full life.

The vision of SHALOM may have been lifted from religious reason, specifically, from the Judaeo-Christian scriptures, but this religious reason, using the “translation” method of both John Rawls and Jurgen Habermas,⁶ can mean sustainable development. What has been enumerated by the UN as its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development² included the following:

1. No Poverty;
2. Zero hunger;
3. Good health and well-being;
4. Quality education;
5. Gender equality;
6. Clean water and sanitation;
7. Affordable and clean energy;
8. Decent work and economic growth;
9. Industry, innovation, and infrastructure;
10. Reduced inequalities;
11. Sustainable cities and communities;
12. Responsible consumption and production;
13. Climate action;
14. Life below water;
15. Life on land;
16. Peace, justice, and strong institutions;
17. Partnerships for the goals.

These may be temporal appropriations of the grandiose vision of the biblical shalom but are strategic to the survival and flourishing of human and planetary life. They also negate the realities that we

⁶ United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> (Last retrieved 11. 23.22)

are experiencing in the present under the regimes of both the old and new normal.

One group of Protestant schools in the Philippines, the Association of Christian Schools, Colleges and Universities (ACSCU) hopes to contribute to address these 17 SDGs thru research and the establishment of research centers. To quote Benjamin Turgano, President of ACSCU,

“We recognize that we need to respond to, engage with, and purposefully shape the biosphere to develop a sustainable future for everyone. This demands that we establish multi-disciplinary and transdisciplinary research centers and institutes addressing global and national issues. These centers will allow our faculty members, students, and researchers to collaborate in various researches. This will provide opportunities to connect with foreign organizations, universities, and institutions who may be interested to collaborate with us and support research initiatives and programs in the field.”⁷

This is where we need to locate our education work. First, it is located in our difficult post-pandemic world made worse by social viruses that include the infodemic and the aggression of pseudo-science; second, in our struggle to make sense of our world and in the context of our realization of our agency as education workers and citizens of our national communities, our world, and our planet; and thirdly, in our vision to make our educational witness contributory not only to our vocational and professional growth and institutional development but most importantly, to bring about the vision of the full-life for all.

⁷ Lifted from Benjamin Turgano, “Behold I Make All Things New.” This was delivered as a Keynote Address during the 59th National Convention and 75th Founding Anniversary of ACSCU, June 7-8, 2021.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rev. Ferdinand A. Anno is currently President of Union Christian College. He is an ordained pastor of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines and also serves as chairperson of the UCCP Faith and Order Commission. He taught Liturgics, history of Christianity, and indigenous theologies at Union Theological Seminary-Philippines and, in a concurrent capacity, serves as Director of the seminary's Doctor of Ministry Program. Professor Anno finished his studies at Leeds University (Ph.D., 2007), University of Edinburgh (M.Th., 1998), Silliman Divinity School (M.Div., 1991), and Union Christian College (B.A., 1987).



“RECOVER TOGETHER, RECOVER STRONGER”

**Towards Global Justice in the Post Pandemic
Covid-19—The Calling of the Church**

Rev. Dr. Jenny Purba

INTRODUCTION

“Recover Together, Recover Stronger,” is the theme chosen by Indonesia as the President of the G20¹ Summit that took place in Bali, Indonesia, from November 15–16th, 2022.

This interesting adage aimed to emphasize the importance of collective efforts to develop more comprehensive and sustainable recovery solutions in the global world among nations. One of the basic values of Indonesia, namely mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), is becoming increasingly significant to help the world to recover and rise together.

The recent global pandemic has impacted many aspects of society, from individual health to the global economy. Therefore, one of the priority issues in the Summit, along with the economic recovery is to strengthen the global health system and sustainable energy including the climate change. Even though if these issues are being taken towards the global justice issue, there are still many homeworks to do like migrations, gender justice, unemployment, economic inequality, poverty reduction, etc.

¹ The G20 is a strategic multilateral platform connecting the world’s major developed and emerging economies started in 1999 aim of discussing policies with the strategic role in securing future global economic growth and prosperity. See <https://www.g20.org/about-the-g20/>

Besides the urging an economic system that looks after the well-being of all, the concern towards the global ecological justice has to be put seriously on the table. Another critical question to arise is who will be responsible for the recovery of the global economy if not the whole nations apart from their status as the most important industrialized and developing economies who gather to discuss international economic and financial stability?

In order to enable better access to global decision-making process, such as the implementation of multilaterally agreed financial standards and targets, climate change, taxes, and sustainable investment practices, the promotion of bigger participation among the G195 stakeholders that are country specific and contextually relevant is very crucial. G195 refers to 195 countries in the Globe and we believe that notwithstanding the political, social, and cultural diversities, this approach allows for greater global representation without isolation. The proposal of a G195 Global Summit among Leaders and Stakeholders will challenge the post-war Neo-liberal foundations and the practices of unethical business practices that endanger the ecology.

GLOBAL JUSTICE

Consider some facts about inequality in today's world. Afghanistan citizens have an average annual income of US\$500, while in Norway, one person can earn about US\$85,000 a year.²

In the countries with the worst health, life expectancy is between 50 and 60 years. The population of the Central African Republic has the lowest life expectancy in 2019 with 53 years, while a person born in Japan can expect to live about 85 years.³ Malaria still kills millions of people each year in developing countries. The impacts of the global warming hit the regions in the pacific more than other parts of the world. Women in some countries still fight for justice. Yet to describe the inequalities in schooling and education. Within these facts how do we embrace the ideal of global justice in this world?

² Average Income Around the World, <https://www.worlddata.info/average-income.php>, accessed 18.11.2022

³ Life Expectancy by Max Roser, Esteban Ortiz-Ospina and Hannah Ritchie *First published in 2013; last revised in October 2019.* <https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy>

We are actually aware that the progress brought about by globalization has given great prosperity not only to individuals but also to nations. The flow of goods, capital, and information enabled people to use the latest technology in manufacturing and public services. However, not all countries have successfully integrated into the global economy. Instead of creating a homogenized world in which differences are overcome, globalization is bringing new forms of social and economic divisions in the worldwide scale.⁴ The sign of our times is inequality on a global scale. Growing inequality in both developing and rich countries exacerbates social divisions and delays economic and social progress. People living in poor countries have little or no access to health and education services, making it difficult to reap the benefits of globalization. Moreover, environmental degradation exacerbates the poverty problem of future generations. With the changing nature of nation-states, cross-border issues are being pushed forward, and multilateral consultations between different countries are becoming increasingly intensified, including: The G8 or G20 that meet frequently to try to coordinate, especially on macroeconomic issues. But people and other nations do not have equal opportunities to participate in the relationship.

Rising global inequality, unemployment, hunger, inadequate access to education, poor health care, food insecurity, corruption, and multinational corporations controlling the world economy, and the current COVID-19 pandemic have forced the needs of action for global action. Planetary crisis, social, and ecological problems can no longer be solved by the state alone. The international justice, resource scarcity, economic systems and neo-liberalism, sustainability and ecological strains are no longer adequately addressed by national regulation. We have to do a global analysis of what should be included.

Justice has traditionally been viewed within the state. Global justice is about justice across and between states. Most of the interest in this area has focused on the issue of distributive justice from the wealthy to those in deep poverty. In this case, what matters is not the distance between me and those in need, but my ability to provide help. The scholar Thomas Pogge states that every individual

⁴ P.169, Richard Gibb, *Grace and Global Justice: The Socio-Political Mission of the Church in an Age of Globalization*, Paternoster, United Kingdom, 2006

have responsibility, especially in the countries with democracies. One reason is that we elect the leaders we vote and we uphold the system. We have responsibility for its outcomes, because its policies and systems. In today global economic order under which millions of people live in dire poverty, we have duty to stop contributing to this harm and provide relief to those who have already suffered.⁵

Today, the world needs it more than ever. The global impact of the pandemic has shaped our perspective of the needs of a strong global health system that is more inclusive, equitable, and responsive to every crisis. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), globally, as of 17th November 2022, there have been 633,263,617 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 6,594,491 deaths.⁶ The global pandemic is impacting every aspect of society, from health and education to international trade. At the same time, gaps remain to this day between countries' ability to cope with crises and their capacity to deal after the crisis. Recognition of the importance of collective action and inclusive collaboration among countries around the world has always been crucial to encourage collective action to shape *Global Health Architecture*, ensuring equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, equality of global health standards, supporting the transformation of national health systems and infrastructures, and to strengthen the resilience of every nation towards any future pandemic.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PANDEMIC TO THE CHURCHES

The pandemic in the last two years has brought us lessons to be learned. How are such lessons to be shared and reshaped into reflections and practices?

In addition, the COVID-19 has taught us what we should value most in life and ethics as the foundation of our action.

1. The pandemic had greater impacts on the most vulnerable groups across the globe: people with underlying health problems, the elderly, indigenous people, unemployed youth,

⁵ P.2-3, Introduction, Thom Brooks, *The Oxford Handbook of Global Justice*, Oxford University Press, United Kingdom, 2020

⁶ **WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard** <https://covid19.who.int/> accessed 18.11.2022

underemployed people, women, children, unprotected workers and migrant workers, indigenous people, which has resulted in considerable increases in inequalities. The citizens could not enjoy equal access to health care, social security, and mutual support system. Migrant workers without social security, also suffered during the lockdowns without salaries. Church needs to do advocacy to those marginalized and excluded: adequate social protection for the socio-economically vulnerable including the elderly, the children, and those unable to work, and support the small farmers and struggling families.

Besides these most impacted groups, as a global citizen, we come to the awareness that we are vulnerable and fragile human being. The need of care for the sick and the dying is highly relevant. Diakonia of the churches should engage more in the public health and social services.

2. The Pandemic has shown that public leadership and management plays an important role in ensuring a good-health systems and well financed public health and social security. Church and Diakonia could establish public leadership and governance to expand competencies and sensibilities for ethics, social justice, common good, fiscal responsibility, and other capacities needed. In the future they will provide care and medical help as well as social support in times of emergency. Diakonia can intervene in the emergency and humanitarian aids, providing direct, and immediate care to the suffering people.
3. The issues of poverty and inequality has been revealed by the pandemic. Thus, the neoliberalism economy failed to promote the common good. Standing in solidarity with displaced and marginalized global citizens, the Church intends to become a countercultural community in a globalized world where the dominant culture is one of economism. Our faith perspectives and valuing of justice and peace demand that the poor and the dispossessed lie at the center of our economic thinking and that our economic systems also work to serve their needs. The principle of human dignity should shape the economic policy making process. The transformation of an economic system that looks after the well-being of all and particularly the most vulnerable, protecting the diversity of life, and safeguarding the future of coming generations is crucial.

4. Churches play important roles, in terms of the faithful congregations and provide health related cares. Providing care, solidarity, and practical assistance, go between regions, countries, etc. Solidarity without borders, as global diakonia has become an urgent challenge.
5. The churches cannot work alone. They must build partnerships, not only at a global level or large church structures, but also between congregations, specialised ministries and networks of people committed to the values of justice, peace and human dignity at local, regional, and national and global levels, linking joint actions from the local, national, regional, and international levels.

THE CALLING OF THE CHURCH: GLOBAL DIAKONIA TOWARDS GLOBAL JUSTICE

In this globalization process by which we become aware of the world as a single place, in any respect, we have to come to experience the world as a whole in its totality. We are connected to events, conditions distant from us in time and space.

We have to be enabled to set this new paradigm to make sense of the world where we live. It informs us of the understanding of cause and effect in this global world. In addressing the issues around global justice, the church should demonstrate its role not only in terms of nations, but also on the global world horizon.

This sense has to reach diakonia as well. Our diakonia in the global context, dealing with global issues and actors, working with global civil society towards global justice.

This global diakonia at the same time has to make impacts to the local problem. Diakonia cannot be limited to the activities of specialized agencies and professional agents. It must be rooted in the life and mission of the church and connected with people from below. There must be a movement of diakonia at all levels. The global challenges have significant consequences on the interpretation of the diakonia intervention to the society. According to the context, the actions of diakonia are passed on from generation to generation. Due to the complexity of the global environment, theological and biblical orientation can lead the church to be aware of providing the services.

Prophetic diakonia is an essential task of the church in response to the needs and challenges of the community in which Christians and churches live. The need for a thorough analysis of the fundamental causes and structures concerning global challenges and poverty requires the church's commitment in critical solidarity with marginalized people. We believe that diakonia in its various forms is inextricably linked to the struggle for justice and peace.⁷

In the Larnaca consultation, diakonia was defined as an effectual expression of Christian testimony in response to the needs and challenges of Christians and the communities in which the church lives.⁸ Besides the introduction of prophetic diakonia, the movement towards a global diakonia is another critical finding, expanded to a global concern, given a space to theological and social reflection from Southern voices and diverse perspectives.⁹

Isabel Apawo Phiri emphasizes that ecumenical diakonia is a global diakonia for all people and the whole inhabited earth. Diakonia is global because it calls for the whole ecumenical community to join in diaconal action worldwide as part of one body, serve with and to all, and form alliances with whoever seeks justice, peace, and integrity of creation or JPIC.¹⁰

The global challenges demand the global responsibility of the church. These challenges require multiple disciplines and rationalities. Therefore, the church needs to broaden and strengthen cooperation and collaboration with multiple actors or players by describing the changing landscape of diaconal action. A church needs strong partnership to build on strengths and overcome challenges. Here comes the role of the church as the go-between diakonos.¹¹ The dialogue in the ecumenical movement can be a dialogue within the

⁷ Kjell Nordstokke, *Liberating Diakonia* (Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk Forlag, 2011), p. 19.

⁸ Klaus Poser, *Diakonia 2000: Called to Be Neighbours: Official Report, WCC World Consultation, Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service, Larnaca, 1986* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987).

⁹ Hookway and Francis, *From Inter-Church Aid to Jubilee: A Brief History of Ecumenical Diakonia in the World Council of Churches*, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2022) pp- 8-9.

¹⁰ Isabel Apawo Phiri, "The Imperative of Diakonia for the Church and Theological Education," *The Ecumenical Review* 71, no. 4 (October 2019): 482-91, <https://doi.org/10.1111/erev.12443>, p. 487.

¹¹ Jenny Purba, *Global Diakonia and Palm Oil Industry in Indonesia, Embedded Economy for an Interdisciplinary Ecclesiological Model of Bridging State, Business and Society* (Berlin: Logos Verlag, 2022)

church and with the others outside the church. Local diakonia needs to be completed by a global diakonia. To be effective, the efforts of the churches to address the needs of the people have to be taken up by the Churches Members beyond the localities.

As one body of Christ, each member of the church has its own function and task and performs it through the gifts that have been given to it. In Jesus, all members share sorrow and joy, support each other in the mission of Christ in particular to hear the cries of those in need and to stand up for their rights. In this universal relationship, the commitment to the local communities and genuine relationships in the local context cannot be neglected. We begin to see things over the eyes of the other, to feel what they are feeling, to suffer, developing a genuine association with the other. Problems and challenges will be at first manifest at the local community level. We are all rooted in our local context. Without a commitment to the local community, these issues go unnoticed, ignored, or actively denied. Our citizenship of the global community must not come at the expense of our local obligations.¹²

David Bosch pinpoints the priority of the local church in praxis since the local church is the primary bearer of the mission and the universal church finds its true existence in the local churches.¹³ In other words, the church is seen to be a global community of local churches and national and global, interconnected with one another. From this perspective, we can see the metaphor of the body of Christ described by Paul in 2 Corinthians.

Global diakonia can never be separated from the local because it is the local voices that are heard and the struggles that are felt; what differentiates global diakonia is the level of approach, the strategy to help the suffering in the local people. The global diakonia is designated on a global-level. Here we find the connection of prophetic diakonia with institutions in this global-level. From this point, the global diakonia intends to integrate local diakonia, helping those at the local level. Closer contact with local congregations and support diaconal work at the grassroots level need to be put seriously in the agenda of global diakonia.

¹² Neil Ormerod and Shane Clifton, *Globalization and the Mission of the Church* (London: T & T Clark, 2009), pp. 150-151.

¹³ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), pp. 378-380.

CONCLUSION

Are we still convinced that the church is an important role player and that its impact is wide ranging and critical? The solidarity movement of Christians in many levels at least gives us an optimistic feeling that the churches have shown their serious intention to help the sufferings in the time of the pandemic. To recover stronger, we need to be together. Churches need to build a network, form alliances across denominations and religions, encourage participation, and invite multi-disciplinary perspectives like economic, management, and leadership. By such encounters with other stakeholders, the recovery and transformation will possibly happen.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bosch, David. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. New York: Orbis Books, 1991.
- Brooks, Thom. *The Oxford Handbook of Global Justice*. United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Gibb, Richard. *Grace and Global Justice, The Socio-Political Mission of the Church in an Age of Globalization*. United Kingdom: Paternoster, 2006.
- Hookway, Esther and Christopher Francis. *From Inter-Church Aid to Jubilee: A Brief History of Ecumenical Diakonia in the World Council of Churches*. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2022.
- Nordstokke, Kjell. *Liberating Diakonia*. Trondheim: Tapir Akademisk Forlag, 2011.
- Ormerod, Neil and Shane Clifton. *Globalization and the Mission of the Church*. London: T & T Clark, 2009.
- Phiri, Isabel Apawo and Chammah J Kaunda. "Diakonia and Development in a Rapidly Changing World." In *Evangelism and Diakonia in Context*, edited by Rose Dowsett et al., Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2016.
- Poser, Klaus. *Diakonia 2000: Called to Be Neighbours: Official Report, WCC World Consultation, Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service, Larnaca, 1986*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1987.
- Purba, Jenny. *Global Diakonia and Palm Oil Industry in Indonesia, Embedded Economy for an Interdisciplinary Ecclesiological*

Model of Bridging State, Business and Society. Berlin: Logos Verlag,2022.

Online Sources

WHO, **WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard** <https://covid19.who.int/> (last retrieved 18.11.2022)

World Data, Average Income Around the World, <https://www.worlddata.info/average-income.php>, (last retrieved 18.11.2022)

Our World in Data, Life Expectancy <https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy>, (last retrieved 18.11.2022)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jenny Purba, holds the Doctor of Diaconic Science (Dr. Diac) degree. She did the doctoral study in the Institute für Diakoniewissenschaft und Diakonie Management - Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal/Bethel in December 2021 after completed her Master of Art Diaconia and Management in 2012 from the same University. Her Bachelor degree

comes from the Satya Wacana Christian University in Salatiga.

Besides attending many international conferences, in 2018, Jenny Purba presented a paper during the Research and Diakonia (ReDi) Conference in Berlin with the topic Theology of Economic Globalization for a Global Diaconia towards Justice. One of the prominent seminars she has attended was the Governance, Economics and Management (GEM) School WCC in Mexico City in September 2018. This GEM-School has shaped her interest and calling in the issues of economic ethics and theology. Now she is working in the Diakonia Department in her church Simalungun Christian Protestant Church (GKPS) in Pematang Siantar and now as the Asian Deputy of International Community of Diaconic Managers (ICDM).



CHURCH AND POPULAR CULTURE:

Toward the Digital Ecclesiology in Responses to the Pandemic and Post-Pandemic Covid-19

Rev. Dr. Norita Novalina Sembiring

ABSTRACT

Ready or not ready, like it or not, churches must rethink their model of service when the Covid-19 pandemic is present in the world at the end of 2019 and spreads quickly in 2020. The churches seemed to be chasing time when the Covid-19 virus spread; it was so massive and forced the Church to limit its church habitus, for example, face-to-face meetings, shaking hands, and celebrating meals together. Our theological perspective must take into account the Covid-19 pandemic and digitization. Digital ecclesiology becomes a new space to reinterpret the face of our church that is relevant and responsive. For this reason, the church is challenged to re-narrate its mission during a pandemic and post-pandemic context so that the gospel of the Kingdom of God is grounded amid a world lamenting. The question is, “What kind of service model proclaims safety needs to be designed in a pandemic—post-pandemic and the acceleration of the digitalization era?” This article will describe the model of the church in responding to the pandemic and post-pandemic situations during popular culture.

Keywords: Church, Covid-19 pandemic and post-pandemic, digital, fellowship and mission.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC: AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL

At the end of 2019, when the first news about the Covid-19 virus occurred in Wuhan, China, it had not made the world community nervous. I still remember very well that some friends responded jokingly. Corona Virus? What is that? “Ahh, we will not be affected; we are far from China.” Some just joked, “Coronavirus, ahh, do not be afraid; it is scarier for Nande Karona or Mama Karona.” These two terms are a nickname for women and men from the Karo Tribe in North Sumatra, Indonesia, from the Karo-karo clan, one of the five clans in the Karo tribe. That is the initial response I got, joking and apathetic.

When the president of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, announced the first positive case of Corona in Indonesia on March 02, 2020, in Jakarta, people who live far from the nation’s capital (Jakarta), even remained calm, “That is in Jakarta, we who live far in the village will not be affected,” he exclaimed. At the end, when news about the Coronavirus spread with terrible facts and even claimed lives, as if the distance was no longer far away, spreading quickly to areas far from the capital, people began to get restless. Many factors caused the anxiety, first, ignorance about the Covid-19 virus itself; second, the flood of information—both factual and hoax; and third, the overwhelming panic that masks are missing from the market; if any, their prices are very high. When this panic occurs, two human faces compete fiercely, namely the tendency to show the face as the best person by helping others or displaying the tendency as the worst person who pursues one’s gain.

The unexpected arrival of the Coronavirus cannot be ignored. The Church, as a community of believers, must respond wisely. Finally, two weeks after the announcement from President Joko Widodo, several churches began to rethink the model of efficient service to their congregations. The government’s call on the 5M in Indonesia version (Washing Hands, Wearing Masks, Keeping Distance, Staying away from Crowds, and Reducing Mobility) warns the public to get used to the new habitus. On March 22, 2020, at my church, GBKP, there was already a church that moved face-to-face worship services into worship in their respective homes. The church building is closed. This decision is not easy and may not satisfy all parties until someone claims this method is a sign of a lack of faith, then spreads his disappointment on social media. At that time, the church was dealing with the horrors of the Covid-19 virus and faced

various responses from church members. However, this method is carried out to break the chain of virus spread amid the increasing number of infected and dead cases in Indonesia. The government's firm call to stay at home, work from home, study from home, and worship from home is one of the joint efforts to fight the pandemic. Even though the church building was closed, the prophetic voice of the Church was still echoed. Through pastoral letters from church synod offices and other ecumenical institutions in Indonesia, the Church shows its theological attitude.

PAST AND PRESENT: WILLINGNESS TO RENEW THE CHURCH

The church's decision and appeal to church members to worship from home certainly have implications for appropriate church methods during the pandemic. The identity of the church should not be blurred, but it must still be clear and firm. Church Council in Indonesia (PGI) in *Pokok-pokok Tugas Panggilan Bersama (PTPB) 2019-2023* understand Church as emphasized below:

Every church is an expression from the church which One, Holy, am, and apostle, that is fellowship believers, in all places and throughout the ages who are "watered from one" Spirit" (1Cor. 12:13), who is called to continue the mission of Jesus Christ, who was sent by God to save this world and reconcile all things with God. Calling church, this not once changed in all the place and along era, although this task must be carried out contextually according to different situations and conditions.¹

From the very beginning, the church has recognized itself as a community of believers called to continue the mission of Jesus Christ to proclaim salvation to the world. That is why churches in Indonesia realize that they are part of the Indonesian nation that must contribute and respond to specific contexts, such as the crisis that emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic, and present the Good News to everyone.

Amid challenges that come from external and internal (pandemic and the attitude of the church community itself), the church must be

¹ PGI, *Dokumen Keesaan Gereja*, 9.

Careful and wise. The message of salvation that brings peace needs to be proclaimed constantly. If the church persists in face-to-face meetings, it is very worrying that the church will become one of the places where the Coronavirus spreads. This is where the fact of faith gets its challenge—the bearer of salvation or the carrier of disease? The church is the bearer of God’s blessing to the world, as stated in the Statement of Faith of the PGI Member Churches, “Churches in Indonesia are called to be a blessing to the Indonesian people and to share responsibility by participating in a positive, critical, creative, and realistic way while keeping hope for the sake of transformation towards a civilized society.”² By using these five paradigms, churches in Indonesia see the development of digitalization positively as an opportunity that can help service tools. Nevertheless, the church must also be critical of the various digital platforms offered while developing creativity that supports services during the pandemic, being realistic about the uncertain duration of the pandemic and post-pandemic, and at the same time, being willing to transform the service model from onsite to online. In short, the church must be willing to renew itself.

DIGITAL ECCLESIOLOGY IN RESPONSES

In Christianity’s history, believers’ fellowship has been tested by religious suffering. However, Christ’s followers can survive and even thrive while suffering. Rodney Stark, a sociologist who studies the social context of early Christianity, in his book, *The Rise of Christianity*, poses the central question, “How the obscure, marginal Jesus movement became the dominant religious force in the Western world in a few centuries?”³ His research found that the growth of Christianity was not mainly or only caused by *religious conversions* that occur massively because of hearing church teachings/doctrine, but because of behavior or relationships social community Christian prime.⁴ Behavior or social relations became the keywords of early Christianity, showing the peculiarities of its character. The Christian understanding of hope, especially in times of crisis, plays a significant

² Ibid., 2.

³ Rodney Stark, *The Rise*. The question he asked is also the subtitle of the book.

⁴ Ibid, 16.

role in this movement's ability to thrive amid an epidemic.⁵ Stark's research shows that early Christianity survived in times of crisis and became a blessing in its social context by living out Christian virtues, one of which is hope.

In the context of the pandemic and post-Covid-19 pandemic that we are currently facing, it is not too much of a stretch if we reflect on the central question asked by Stark above. How can Christianity in Indonesia, a minority, become a dominant religious force during a pandemic and in the era of digitization? Therefore, the church is challenged to reformulate its ecclesiology based on these two perspectives. In her article, *Special Issue: Digital Ecclesiology*, Heidi A. Campbell asserted,

Digital ecclesiology is a phrase used by individuals to reflect on the strategies used, and the motivations behind, churches' negotiation with digital media. It points to the need to unmask the cultural and theological conceptions that lie behind different definitions of church and assumptions about technology. The idea of a digital ecclesiology invites a robust conversation about what the theology of the church should look like in a digital age. Specifically, it asks church leaders and theologians to consider what factors should inform choices related to technology use in liturgy, worship, and mission, and to carefully reflect on how such decision making might transform or support established church traditions. Digital technology interactions have the potential to frame how we understand and explain the nature and structure of the Christian church in new ways. It is in this line of inquiry that this special issue proceeds.⁶

Campbell's opinion above shows the willingness of the church and its leaders to seriously talk about what church theology should look like in the digital era by considering the established church traditions so far, so as to find new ways to church. When Campbell uses the phrase "digital ecclesiology", he means to answer the need for more scholarly analysis of how churches, church institutions, and Christian communities engage with and respond to digital media and digital cultures ... then opens the door to more refined

⁵ Ibid, 74.

⁶ Campbell, "Special Issue", 4.

considerations of theological and ecclesiological implications of this technological innovation.⁷ In line with Campbell's idea, my colleague wrote,

The idea of a digital church is an offer of church life today. The virtual world, even though on the one hand has the potential to be misused for certain interests; on the other hand, it can be an opportunity where the Church has a new perspective on the transcendent reality of God. Rather than seeing the reality of using social media with all its threats, it is time for the Church to provide new benefits for the development of communication, community, and discipleship.⁸

By emphasizing the importance of building communication, community, and discipleship, the above ideas encourage churches to serve more optimally digitally. The innovation of technological developments from time to time cannot be dammed. The wise attitude of the church to respond is necessary.

The development of the industrial revolution from time to time emphasizes that technology develops in line with the context and needs of the people of its time. Positively, we need to appreciate the development of modern science. Elia Delio in her book, *Making All Things New: Catholicity, Cosmology, and Consciousness*, assesses technological development as a cultural evolution. This kind of cultural evolution must be responded to with the proper religious attitude. He quoted Einstein's statement, "Science without religion is lame, and religion without science is blind." In the same vein, Pope John Paul II said, "Science can purify religion from error and superstition; religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes."⁹ A healthy dialogue between science and religion is needed as a contribution from the theological world amid world development.

One of the characteristics of this development is the rapid development of artificial intelligence. The development of the digital world, starting from the invention of computers, the internet, and Facebook, to new terms, such as *posthuman*, *machina sapiens*,

⁷ Ibid., 4-5.

⁸ Yahya, "Gereja," 271.

⁹ Delio, *Making All Things New*, xx.

cybergnosticism, virtually human, mindfiles, cyber consciousness, robo-human hybrid, has shown an increasingly broad paradigm of thinking.¹⁰ Only the church, with an open system, can be aware of these changes and perceive them as a movement of the presence of the mystery. The intended open system is the willingness of the church and its stakeholders to open up and dialogue wisely for the mission of the Kingdom of God that reaches church members and society in their various struggles. Delio's opinion aligns with Campbell's idea about opening a conversation to formulate what kind of theology is present in the digital era. The rapidity of popular culture with its digital platform is the most relevant and realistic solution as a church service tool, especially during the pandemic and post-pandemic period, but wisdom is needed to implement it.

The church's mission to proclaim the Kingdom of God to the world must not be stopped because of the pandemic. When our public sphere is filled with anxiety, pain, death, and even uncertainty, church theology must be present in public. When talking about the theology of the Kingdom of God, Jurgen Moltmann emphasized, "... theology has to be *public* theology: public, critical and prophetic complaint to God – public, critical and prophetic hope in God. Its public character is constitutive for theology, for the kingdom of God's sake."¹¹ For Moltmann, new theology can be called authentic theology if it is carried out in the public sphere and responds to public struggles. That is, the public becomes the *focus* as well as the *locus* in theology. Therefore, the church must have the courage to deconstruct and reconstruct its theological building. This is where the problem arises. The tension between popular culture and tradition comes to the fore.

When some churches start to open up to using digital platforms in their ministry during the pandemic, various reasons arise, ranging from inadequate church finances, not all church members having supporting tools (for example, android cellphones or laptops), geographical locations that do not have good signals, additional costs to buy quotas that burden the congregation, the unavailability of the Multimedia Team in the church so that they are afraid of being labeled as lacking in faith. This kind of dialectics clearly emerged during adapting new habits due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It is not easy for the church to deconstruct and ultimately reconstruct

¹⁰ Ibid, 104-106.

¹¹ Moltmann, *God for Secular Society*, 5.

the model of the church during the pandemic and post-pandemic. However, the mission of the church cannot be stopped. Instead, the church is being challenged to pronounce its prophetic voice in the midst of crisis and uncertainty in the public sphere.

Gradually, physical meetings in worship at churches and Bible studies in congregation homes which are usually carried out in turns, have been turned into other forms of worship such as YouTube live-streaming, recorded sermons, Bible Study, and Family Worship sermons via Zoom Meetings and YouTube, WhatsApp Groups. This variety of worship is now carried out in the homes of each congregation independently or with family. Soon this becomes a new habit of worship during the pandemic. The online community has become a model for fellowship during the pandemic. According to Campbell, this kind of new habitus requires digital severe literacy.

“... there is a need for ecclesial leadership to cultivate digital literacies that do not simply focus on the practical use of technology, but literacies that unpack the theological ethos and values of different technologies and their implementation in church environments. These digital literacies also require churches and church leaders to understand how to construct digital resources and presences online that match and echo their core vision and mission. This requires creating a flow and connection between a church’s online-digital and offline-embodied identities.¹²

Why are Campbell’s ideas about leadership and digital literacy so important? Because intelligent leadership, in responding to the pandemic and digitalization, has so determined the direction of church services that build a strong church community amid the gripping pandemic. I still remember very well that there were church leaders worried about using digital platforms. At least one of the reasons I have stated above appears in his argument.¹³ The

¹² Campbell, *When Religion*, 10.

¹³ I feel the need to reiterate the reasons that have arisen around the conversation about how difficult it is to start a new church model during a pandemic by utilizing digital platforms, namely: starting from inadequate church finances, not all church members have supporting tools (e.g., android phone or laptop), geographical location with poor signal, additional costs to purchase quotas that burden the congregation, unavailability of the Multimedia Team in the Church, and fear of being labeled as lacking in faith.

situation can reduce immunity when the assembly meetings are filled with arguments, impacting physical health. That is why “Moving towards a digital ecclesiology should be approached as a process of thoughtful, faith-based reflection, and communal conversations that consider both the historic and emergent social and ecclesiological implications of digital media integration for a church in a digital age.”¹⁴ Many factors must be considered in order to realize digital ecclesiology. This manifestation is, of course, closely related to the church Confession, which is the face of the ecclesiology of a church.

My Church, GBKP, states its Confession regarding the Church as follows:¹⁵

1. The church is a community of believers called to belong to God and Jesus Christ as its head (I Peter 2:9; Ephesians 1:22), constantly being renewed by the Holy Spirit to become the “salt” and “light” of the world (Matthew 16:18).
2. The nature of the church is holy, one, and universal.
3. The church is called to carry out three tasks in order to create a missionary congregation to proclaim the values of the Kingdom of God that are visible in the life of Jesus, namely: love, taking sides with the poor, weak, and marginalized for uphold truth and justice (Luke 4:18–9) and be able to be positive, creative, critical, and realistic about world values (Romans 12:2).
4. The church dialogues with other religions and governments to witness the love of Jesus.
5. The church appoints special ministers: Pastors, Elders, and Deacons (Ephesians 4:11) and commissions all believers to witness their faith (I Peter 2:9) so that church services are organized.
6. The church, as a community, that looks organized and structured, requires a board of directors called the Congregational Council, the Classical Council, and the Synod Council.

I found several keywords worth considering in the dialectic of digital ecclesiology: constantly being renewed, a missionary congregation, and a positive, creative, critical, and realistic attitude.

¹⁴ Campbell, *When Religion*, 10.

¹⁵ Moderamen GBKP, *Pokok-pokok*, 14.

These three characteristics can be an appropriate entry point for the conversation and realization of digital ecclesiology.

By utilizing digital platforms, the church also responds to the struggles and fragility of its citizens. This response can refer to the incarnation of Christ. Christ that is fully divine and fully human, also shared suffering, as was the human attribute of vulnerability and suffering. This wonderful exchange by Calvin affirms,

“This is the wonderful exchange which, out of his measures less benevolence, [the Son of God] has made with us, that, becoming Son of man with us, he has made us sons of God with him; that, by his descent to earth, he has prepared an ascent to heaven for us; that, by taking on our mortality, he has conferred his immortality upon us; that, accepting our weakness, he has strengthened us by his power; that, receiving our poverty unto himself, he has transferred his wealth to us; that, taking the weight of our iniquity upon himself (which oppressed us), he has clothed us with his righteousness.”¹⁶

The classical Christian doctrine of the incarnation of Christ can also be the entrance of the church into today’s popular culture. Its goal is to embrace human fragility and offer the loving embrace of Christ to humanity that is lamenting amid the Covid-19 pandemic. This is where church traditions that meet popular culture can be elaborated in order to create a mutually reinforcing fellowship.

GBKP itself should not stutter with the use of digital platforms in its services. In 2020, GBKP proclaimed its service program priority as the Year of Information Technology (IT), with the theme “Improving the ability of GBKP residents in managing information and skills in the use of information technology.” Hasn’t that theme become actual amid a pandemic and post-pandemic? The ability of GBKP residents to manage information and skills in using information technology is being tested if not upgraded. Even the 2019 GBKP Pastor Conference meeting raised the theme *Upgrade Your Church*. This momentum seems to prepare the Church and its citizens for digital ecclesiology. It does not only aim to manage information but also for online worship meetings as an encounter with the Transcendent God and fellow human beings. It is not only about

¹⁶ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, 173 .

skills in using information technology but also using it to survive during the collapse of economic defenses during the pandemic.

We also heard that during the pandemic, there were many reductions in employees by companies affected by the Corona Virus. Several companies can no longer pay their employees' salaries, so some of them are paid half their salary, temporarily laid off, or even laid off forever. I heard the story of a mother who was laid off from her job and switched to selling food online. She told her story when I led the Bible Study for Women on Zoom Meetings at her church in 2020. He, who has not been very familiar with social media, now has to learn to peddle his food through social media. He is willing to provide ready delivery services to his home by motorbike. That is one way to survive from day to day. Not only church habitus but personal and family habits have also changed.

This new habitus is not without problems. There is an apparent social gap based on the geography of residence. Urban areas may quickly adapt to *screens* due to the availability of the internet, but this is not the case for people living in rural areas with prolonged internet access and inadequate tools, for example: do not have an android cellphone or laptop. In addition, large churches that have adequate budgets can immediately procure tools for live-streaming worship recordings. Not so with small churches. Churches that cannot do so only participate in live-streaming services organized by the Church's head office, Moderamen GBKP. Here, I consider that online communities organized by local churches can bind a closer sense of brotherhood because those who worship online recognize the physical building of the church, its liturgy, the people who serve in worship, and also the condition of the members of the congregation who need to be prayed for. Not so with those who attend live-streaming services from other churches, their *sense of belonging* feels looser because they are not from the same local Church and are relatively unfamiliar with the situation there.

As for Bible Study, Family Worship, Household Visits, and even Consolation Worship for churches and church members who can organize them through the Zoom Meetings platform, local church fellowship can continue to be maintained, even if they meet on screen. However, churches and church members who are unable to do so suggest that their church members worship independently with the help of sermon videos sent by local pastors or recordings of pastors' sermons on Youtube.

Several methods are used for the Holy Communion: hybrid, onsite, and online live-streaming. In some GBKP churches, the local Church continues to guide the Holy Communion by reading the liturgy of the Lord's Supper as contained in the Liturgy Book. Then when the pastor in the Church invites the people to eat bread and drink wine—which the local church elder or deacon has previously circulated to the homes of the congregation—then each family member who is at home takes bread and wine, eats and drinks them according to the flow. Liturgy was presided over by the priest. The Holy Communion's timing follows the Sunday Service schedule at the church. However, there were also church members who admitted that they could not attend the service at the appointed service hours, so they took their own time and played back the recording of the service found on the Youtube link of their church and performed Holy Communion as the pastor guided the liturgical flow. This experience is also interesting; how is the sacredness of the Holy Communion using live-streaming when members of the congregation do not follow it live? Maybe this can be a follow-up research.

In the midst of massive live-streaming services, I realized that church members attended Sunday services many times that day. After he had a live-streaming service at his church, he joined another church's live-streaming service because it could be replayed later. Some are very satisfied with attending several weekly worship services on YouTube. There is an impression that he got a richer understanding by listening to Pastor A's and Pastor B's sermons, then Pastor C's. I often ask again, "But the sermon's message is carried out in everyday life, right?" Because sometimes, I think this habit can be oriented to mere personal satisfaction, not communal; moreover, the community where he attends further services is not tied to his local church. This reality is also interesting to observe further. Does the online church not need to be tied to a communal but prioritize personal aspects only?

Over time, when data showed a decline in Covid-19 cases in Indonesia, several churches began to open onsite worship with rigorous health protocols. At that time, the churches in Indonesia does a hybrid worship model. Even if you go to church, the long chairs in the church can only be occupied by one or two people so that there is still distance. Entering the church area, you must wash your hands and use hand sanitizer as often as possible, especially after giving offerings. Instead of circulating the offering bag, each

person deliver their offering to the available box. Indeed, some churches still prohibit the elderly, those who are sick, and pregnant women from attending church. They are considered vulnerable. That is why even though there are congregations who worship face-to-face at the church, the church assembly or GBKP synod still organizes live-streaming services that can be followed from home.

There are several practical reasons for this, namely: first, to facilitate members of the congregation who cannot attend church services due to vulnerability (illness, older people, pregnant women); both practical reasons are economical—it is a shame if the live-streaming worship equipment that has been purchased is costly when it is discontinued at this time; the three hybrid worship models that use technological instruments provide service space for church youth. This last reason is very interesting because the involvement of young people familiar with digital platforms is so widespread during the pandemic and post-pandemic period. This means that churches provide the broadest possible service space for young people with expertise in the information technology field. I see this kind of church model as an intergenerational pattern that the church should continue. Maybe we can call it a blessing in disguise? GBKP interprets the service program's priority in 2021 as *the Young Generation becomes a Blessing*. In the midst of a pandemic and post-pandemic, church regeneration seems to be getting more and more prominent. That means the church will always survive and develop from time to time even though challenges come, even those that come unexpectedly. That is the hope of the believer.

KEEP STEPPING AND BE A BLESSING

We have been in a pandemic and post-pandemic situation for almost three years. Ready or not, it has given birth to a new habitus in our ecclesiology. Digital ecclesiology seems to be a new discourse to be reckoned with in the life of the church in the midst of popular culture. That does not mean swallowing the digital platforms that are offered, but instead studying them seriously and communicating wisely with the traditions and teachings of the church so far. The pandemic and post-pandemic show the face of our vulnerability. Joas Adiprasetya, an Indonesian theologian, offers his constructive

proposal on a post-pandemic church that responds to fragility under the name of the *Proflective Church*.¹⁷ He said,

Precisely in that vulnerability, the reflective church longs for a future God who promises to meet and restore it. He needs to faithfully walk forward together, though slowly and staggered, in confusion and indecision, but still with complete determination to fight for virtue. Every time the *proflective church* steps forward, it will encounter fragile faces to which it must respond with the virtues that Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit has bestowed upon His church.¹⁸

This view affirms a church that faithfully continues its ecclesiastical pilgrimage into a vulnerable world. Walking slowly with God with various raging feelings is a necessary attitude while responding to the fragility of others who are surviving.

The post-pandemic church cannot deny the various traumatic experiences experienced by its citizens, whether it is the death of a close person, family, or lover, or the unstable economic conditions to this day. Shelly Rambo calls *this afterlife* in her book *Resurrection Wounds: Living in the Afterlife of Trauma* (2017). According to Rambo,

Some wounds do not go away. They remain invisible, operating below the surface of our lives. When and if these wounds surface, they are often unrecognizable and misunderstood. As insights about how violence affects bodies, severe social relations, and transmits across generations emerge, there is a growing need to take account of wounds and their continued impact on us. I have referred to the present challenges using “after-living” and “ongoingness.”¹⁹

This opinion shows how complex traumatic experiences are that leave scars, and those wounds never really go away. Septemmy E. Lakawa, an Indonesian female theologian, used this idea to shows

¹⁷ Adiprasetya *Gereja Pascapandemi*, 45.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 60.

¹⁹ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 145.

the struggles around the pandemic that have never really ended but in which there is effort and hope to move on. Strictly speaking,

a kind of *post-waiting*, like a walking survivor who needs to stop, even for a moment, bent down to breathe slowly, letting uncertainty overwhelm us. In that *afterlife*, the Church experienced a pandemic as well as hopes that the pandemic would pass. However, the residual *insidious* (which continues to erode and leave scars) will continue to haunt ... the Church stopped to wait and learn to breathe correctly in closed spaces ... the Church bowed down like an empty *post* and turned to the voice calling his name (John 20:16). The posture of “turning away” from this “gap” may be complementary to the image of “going slowly” which will not always be smooth and straight. The resilience of the Church was also formed from polyphonic movements like this.²⁰

The posture of standing, stopping and breathing, and turning is a bid for an *afterlife vulnerable embrace*. This polyphonic movement becomes the step-by-step needed to survive, struggle, and continue to live alone and with others.

To live the journey together, the post-pandemic church needs to carry out a transformative diaconia that responds to the struggles of church members. The face of church deacons in the pandemic and post-pandemic period must emerge, a face that is not only charitable and incidental but also a face that characterizes the characteristics of church members who are willing to stand up, stop, breathe, and turn to walk slowly in the demands of the Triune God. E. Louise William, in her article, *Reflections on the Diaconate: For a More Diaconal Church for the Sake of the World*, emphasized the importance of the diaconia of God’s mission in the world so that it needs to have a primary place in the life, leadership, and mission of the church. for him,

Suppose we believe that the church exists to embody the Servant Christ in the world so that all may know God’s love and share in the fullness of life that God desires for all. In that case, it seems that it is essential that we consider again

²⁰ Lakawa, *Menggereja Proflektif*, 6.

how the diaconate can provide critical leadership for this crucial calling. The goal is to unleash the people of God to “Go in peace. Serve the Lord”²¹

Digital ecclesiology deacons encourage churches, both organizationally and individually, to recognize God’s love by sending their citizens to carry out missions to serve God and others in peace. The mission was also echoed by Jesus while standing in the temple by quoting the text of Isaiah 61:1-2,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19 KJV)

These times are not easy, but that does not mean hope goes extinct. Living churches respond to the struggles in the midst of their context (pandemic and post-pandemic) by seeing new opportunities that can help their ministry to continue to proclaim liberation to the captives, and a sight to the blind, to liberate those in need, oppressed, to proclaim that the year of the Lord’s grace has come. Be a church that keeps on going, even if the steps are heavy and slow, and still be a blessing to the world.

LET US SING

I close this article by raising a song of hope amid various struggles in the context of the agricultural suffering of the Karo people decades ago from a spiritual song entitled *Suan Kol*. This song is found in the Kitab Ende-Enden GBKP no. 220 and composed in Kidung Jemaat (KJ) No. 333 with the title *Sayur Kubis Jatuh Hargae*. I will present it in two languages, Karo and English, which have been translated by my colleague from the Church Music and Worship Development Bureau (BPIMG) at GBKP. This song is about our vulnerability, suffering, and human struggles when disaster strikes. However, it knitted with hope and hope to the Lord, the Giver of Life and Salvation. Let us sing!

²¹ Williams, *Reflections on the Diaconate*, 185.

Suan Kol

*Suan kol la lit ergana, suan tomat kena bayung
Di cengkih pe labo erbunga, binaga pe la lit lakona
Anem page krina lambang, tah pe manuk kena bernung
Asuh-asuhen pe kerina, enggo keru me kap terdaya*

*Reff: Ije pusuhku erbebe, ku ja nari perlawesku,
maka lit si malemna
Kuendesken man Dibata, krina perbeben geluhku,
la si pejoresa
la kap singklini aku, la kapen sekawalku,
ibas krina pergeluhku
Pengapul si tuhu-tuhu, enggo tetap me ukurku,
ibas krina pergeluhku*

Planting Cabbage

Planting cabbage meets no price, tomato plants hit by the pests
Even the clove trees do not blossom, and the sale hasn't sold out yet
Though the rice field produce failed, and the chicken got pestilence
The whole livestock pets, have been entirely pawned

*Chorus: There when my heart's struggling, do not know
where to go, for achieving the peace
To God I surrender, all the struggles of my life,
God can solve it alone
God, the Lord, is my saviour. God, indeed,
is my protector, in the whole of my life
The truest comforter, my heart is being peaceful,
in the whole of my life
God, the Lord, is my savior. God, indeed,
is my protector, in the whole of my life
The truest comforter, my heart is being peaceful,
in the whole of my life*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adiprasetya, Joas. *Gereja Pascapandemi Merengkuh Kerapuhan*. Jakarta: STFT Jakarta & BPK Gunung Mulia, 2021.
- Afandi, Yahya "Gereja Dan Pengaruh Teknologi Informasi Digital Ecclesiology." *Jurnal Fidei 1* no. 2 (Desember): 270-283. <http://www.stt-tawangmangu.ac.id/ejournal/index.php/fidei> (accessed 29.10.2022).
- Campbell, Heidi A. "Special Issue: Digital Ecclesiology." *Ecclesial Practices 7* (April 2020): 1-10. doi:10.1163/22144417-bjA1000 (accessed 26.05.2022).
- Delio, Ilia. *Making All Things New: Catholicity, Cosmology, Consciousness*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015.
- Lakawa, Septemmy E. "'Menggereja Proflektif': Gereja Merapuh - Sebuah Aporia Teologis Dan Paradoks Sosial Di Indonesia." Jakarta, 2021.
- Migliore, Daniel L. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004.
- Moderamen GBKP. *Pokok-Pokok Pengakuan Iman GBKP*. Kabanjahe: Abdi Karya, 2015
- Moltmann, Jürgen. *God for Secular Society: the Public Relevance of Theology*. Translated by Margaret Kohl. London: SCM Press, 1999.
- PGI. *Dokumen Keesaan Gereja Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja Di Indonesia (DKG-PGI) 2019-2024*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2020.
- Rambo, Shelly. *Resurrecting Wounds: Living in the Afterlife of Trauma*. Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2017.
- Stark, Rodney. *The Rise of Christianity*. Harper San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1997.
- Williams, E. Louise. Reflections on the Diaconate: For a More Diaconal Church for the Sake of the World. *Currents in Theology and Mission 42*, no. 3 (July 2015):184-190.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rev. Norita Novalina Sembiring was born in Kabanjahe, November 20th, 1982. She is an ordained pastor in Gereja Batak Kristen Protestan. She graduated studied her doctoral in *Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Theology (STFT)* in Jakarta. Currently, she is serving in Yayasan Perguruan Tinggi Neumann Indonesia board as General Secretary and also as a vice secretary for Pastors' Conference.



CHURCH AND POST-PANDEMIC COVID-19:

Spirituality and E-Worship from Youth Perspective

Windvy Yu Kwan Ching

The relationship between Pandemic and virtual technology is inseparable under the observation in these three years. During the time of Pandemic, church societies in the world established E-worship for the sake of maintaining worship life for brothers and sisters which follow the text ‘not neglecting to meet together (Hebrews 10:25).’ This merging transformation can be regarded as shifting or progress from traditional worship mode which actual interaction is occurred. It is because worship service is a gathering for praising the Lord our God. Since the development of virtual technology is diversification, it is readily for people to adopt E-worship. Such church ecology is lasted for three years. However the influences are still affecting the churches today, people may ask about the lack of interaction especially through worship service. Another temptation is convenient. Some of the church members may switch on the E-worship anytime or on bed while the worship service is getting started. As a result, how is the spirituality of the church members under such ‘New Normal’?

The following discussion is going to explore the situation of spirituality of church members under the post-pandemic situation. The foundation of the discussion is based on the context of author¹ and the Lutheran theological background.²

¹ Author is a member of Chinese Rhenish Church, Hong Kong.

² Author is currently a theological student of Lutheran Theological Seminary.

According to the principal Lutheran confessional writing, the Augsburg Confession (Confessio Augustana, CA), 1530, article 5 of the Ministry and article 7 of the Church which are pointed out that the conditions to obtain the Christian Faith are through the Word and the Sacraments. Moreover, the Gospel is rightly taught, and the Sacraments are rightly administered to obtain the Christian Faith under the church context. Based on these statements Lutheran worship is open for contextualization or inculturation of worship. As mentioned, majority churches prefer to establish the E-worship to maintain worship life and even sacraments. Although there are controversial debates on sacraments during E-worship, it is not going to discuss here.

The intension of having E-worship under Pandemic is good. Moreover it is also a big step to the merging of ministry and technology which open up a new page on doing God's work. From now on, churches are proceeded into a 'New Normal' paradigm. Not everything but most of the ministries may organize through network, and since then church members do not have much actual contact with others. Perhaps the closest part and inner part of sharing such as personal spirituality experiences occur only depends on close relationship between brothers and sisters. This phenomenon may reduce along with the reduction of actual contact. Moreover, when E-worship is established, brothers and sisters who originally needs to serve in the normal service are no longer woke up so early. As a result, they may procrastinate to the condition of E-worship such as wake up 5 minutes before the start of E-worship, participate the E-worship anytime but not in the Sunday morning. Such procrastination affects the spirituality directly.

Once the shift is done, the situations cannot be turn back. The application of E-worship is not only cons but also there are benefits. Glad to see some of the youths ask for serving as live-stream controller in many churches actively. They try their best to improve the quality of E-worship, to ensure the smooth worship service. By these means, it shows their attitude are transforming from church attendant into serving the Lord Jesus Christ by their heart. At the same time, Hong Kong churches are facing the impact of migration. Quality E-worship can be unexpected tool to do the pastoral care to their church members.

According to the church history, the harder the social situation, the flourishing the Gospel. The 'New normal' situation stimulates the

churches including pastors and the whole congregations to reflect, what is church, what is the faith to God. This is how the church transforms into an organic church. 'Organic church' is a term that describe the church society which reflects what is the meaning when church society faces on the challenges. In other word, church society is not an organization, not a robot to follow what the traditions do, but with thinking, critical considerations. Perhaps this shifting can encourage brothers and sisters on strengthen the spirituality themselves as such church society. Church leaders are also a crucial role to think about what their role can do to obtain the Christian Faith through E-worship. There is no definite answer, but Author believe the whole process is beneficial to the spirituality of the whole church society.



THE ROLE OF RELIGION TO OVERCOME CLIMATE CHANGE

Presented at Jew-Christian-Muslim Conference (JCM),
Padangsidempuan, North Sumatra, August 7–15, 2022

Marko Mahin

WHY CLIMATE CHANGE?

Climate change is a global issue and has been discussed globally since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is one of the conventions listed in Agenda 21 and was agreed at the conference. The Convention on Climate Change was ratified by Indonesia under Statute No. 6 of 1994. The main objective of the Convention is to maintain a stable concentration of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere so as to ensure food availability and sustainable development.

Why should we think about the problem of climate change? It is a global environmental issue that is still a long way off. Does it not belong to developed countries? As a matter of fact, it is becoming increasingly clear that climate change is much closer than people think. This problem is no longer a problem for developed countries, but should become a matter of concern for Indonesians.

In Central Kalimantan, climate change is not only a theoretical problem. The traditional farmers of Dayak, who are also members of the church, shared that in the past, they could determine how long the dry season was and how long the rain season was. Based on this calculation, they can grow crops (corn, cucumber, watermelon, vegetables) in fertile land on the river bank that dries up during the

dry season. That is no longer possible at this time. Neither raining nor flooding can be predicted. Even the flood came not once. In a year, it can be three or five times. For that reason, lately they never harvest because the drought is getting longer and the rainy season is getting more intense.

The natural phenomena that often occur in Central Kalimantan are forest and land fires that cause haze disasters, disturb human respiratory organs, and disrupt human activity. This happens because the extent of the Central Kalimantan is dominated by peatlands which are very sensitive to fire. The World Bank estimated economic losses approximately over US\$16 billion due to forestfires in Indonesia in 2015. This is more than twice the cost of post-tsunami reconstruction in 2004 (Glauber and Gunawan, 2015). Central Kalimantan ranks second after South Sumatra for forestfires. From June to October 2015, approximately 429 hectares of forest burned in the Central Kalimantan (Höing, 2018).

“Wayah ujan bisa lelep, wayah pandang minyup asep” (during the rainy season we get wet, during the dry season we inhale the smoke). This is the Dayak people’s short sentence describing their fate in the face of an environmental catastrophe, which is said with a sad tone of lamentation. This is evidence that climate change is very close and poses a threat to the living space of people in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. Climate change is impacting on the poor, traditional farmers, indigenous communities whose livelihoods depend on forests.

In general, nobody argues that science, technology, political policies, and economic measures are important elements in mitigating and combating climate change. However, according to Al Gore (2007), “ ... Global warming is not only limited to scientific or political issues, but also ethical issues for the environment.” Based on Gore’s statement, this article aims to address the important role of religion in identifying, promoting, and implementing ethical solutions to climate change. As in sociological theories, religion has a function in society, ethical teachings, scope and influence, and the capacity to inspire adherents into action. According to Jamieson (1996), this unique role of religion has been often absent from scientific, economic, technological, and policy discussions.

THE FUNCTION OF RELIGION IN SOCIETY

Emile Durkheim (see Emerson, Monahan & Mirola, 2011) argues that the primary role of religion in society is to give meaning and purpose to life. It pertains to many things in life, which are hard to understand and are still a mystery. For the religious beliefs help so many people to understand things that cannot be explained by science.

Secondly, religion reinforces social unity and stability (social cohesiveness). Religion reinforces the stability of society in at least two ways. First, it gives people a shared set of beliefs and therefore an important agent of socialization. Second, community, religious practices, such as gathering in places of worship, bring people together physically, facilitate their communication and social interactions, and thereby strengthen their social bonds.

The third role of religion is to become agents of social control and therefore to strengthen the social order. Religion teaches people moral behaviour and thus helps them to become good members of society. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Ten Commandments are perhaps the most widely known set of rules of moral conduct.

The fourth function of religion is the enhancement of psychological and physical well-being. Religious beliefs and practices can improve psychological well-being by being a source of comfort for people in difficult times and by increasing their social interactions with others in places of worship. Many studies have shown people of all ages, not only the elder, are happier and more content with their lives if they are religious. Religiosity has also been shown to contribute to improved physical health. Moberg (2008) found in her research that individuals who are religious tend to live longer than those who are not.

The ultimate role of religion is to motivate people to work for positive social change. History shows how religious beliefs prompted Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights activists to reject the politics of skin colour segregation.

In sum, Durkheim from the standpoint of functionalist sociological theory states that religion is an integrating force in society because it has the power to form collective beliefs. It ensures the cohesiveness of the social fabric by promoting a feeling of belonging and collective awareness.

From Durkheim's perspective, we may learn that religion is not imaginary. Religion is very real; it is the social expression. Religion

is the expression of the collective consciousness of society, which is the merger of all individual consciences, which then creates its own reality.

Thus religion can provide the foundation for common purposes and values that can sustain social solidarity. Religion can bind people together, strengthen group norms, and exercise social control by defining good and bad behaviour and setting boundaries (Johnstone, 2004). The ethical and social aspects of each of these positions add to the potential of religious communities to address climate issues collectively and individually.

With regard to climate change, with all these threats and harmful effects, religion can promote social solidarity, not just at the level of individual religions, but also between religions. Religion becomes a force with a positive effect as an antithesis to the use of religious power for destructive purposes.

In this way, dialogues are held that put aside all differences to save the earth, which is a common house. The climate crisis will be considered a common enemy. Therefore, the enemy of religion is not the other religions, but a climatic crisis that will exterminate everybody of any religion.

The climate crisis can be used as a stronger unifying force, with an emphasis on similarities rather than differences. With regard to contemporary issues and climate change, it is hoped that more specific and unique functions of religion will emerge, such as building of motivation and inspiration for people to make the necessary changes (Johnstone, 2004). This can happen because religion uniquely has the function of conveying a call to the heart, human empathy, and higher values that inspire individuals and society to go beyond narrow personal interests. Such appeals contribute to establishing moderation, restraint and will make sacrifices for the common good. Max Weber (1930) in his essay, "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism", demonstrates how religious teachings can encourage and motivate his followers to pursue economic prosperity. I think it's not impossible to use the same thing to encourage people to take action against the environmental crisis.

On the other side, one has to realize the destructive power of religion. Religion can cause adverse effects or dysfunctions, such as conflict, persecution, and apathy toward economic inequality. Sociologists like Karl Marx also said that religion acts as the opium of the masses and justifies prevailing ideologies and exploitation.

Historically, religion has been a source of injustice, violence, and inhumanity—not only a source of justice, peace, and human rights.

The same thing happens when we talk about the role of religion in dealing with climate change. As written by Gerten and Bergmann (2012) the role of religion in mitigating and adapting to climate and other environmental changes is ambivalent and complex, with progressive and regressive tendencies operating at the same time. On the one hand, there is a trend for religious organizations and individuals to become ‘greener’ while screening their traditions for moral imperatives to act against global warming and to respect the natural environment in general. On the other hand, the worldviews and practices of religious communities can also influence the perception of environmental changes and their interpretation in a way that essentially ignores them or aggravates them even further. As an example, climate change is sometimes interpreted superficially from a Christian apocalyptic perspective as if it were a God-given, inescapable reality that the faithful cannot and must not prevent. Such fatalist interpretations indicate the theological and practical challenges for religious leaders and communities to re-read the scriptures in a historically and contextually correct way.

ROLE OF RELIGION

In response to the ecological crisis, we should begin by acknowledging that the root of the ecological crisis lies in the modern human perspective on nature. Nature is only regarded as an object of economic benefit. Robert Borrong said that it has led to a change in human behavior towards nature. Humans see nature in an attitude of “economic wants” and no longer just “economic needs”, from an attitude of “need” to an attitude of “greed” (1999:43). Borrong went on to say that global warming is an accumulation of pollution by modern humans (1999:82–96).

Michael Reder (2012) argues that religions could be formidable participants in climate discussions due to their ‘social capital’ as well as their traditional concern over ethics and morality. According to him, religions function as social actors; they play an important role, not only in the private but also in the public sphere, providing social capital and moral background or functioning as cultural actors. The main function of religions from the perspective of social capital is to build solidarity networks in order to adapt to the impacts of climate change or to strengthen the ability of the poor to act. The

exchange of knowledge, money, and human capital can support this. For instance, education is an important aspect of society, in which religions function as social capital and strengthen both awareness of the impacts of climate change and social justice. Religion as a provider of social capital is able to empower the local people, particularly those in developing countries who face the social impacts of climate change. But religious communities can also be political actors on the national and international level by, for example, protecting the rights and interests of the poor.

Concerning the role of religion to overcome climate change, I am very impressed and inspired by the writings of Paula J. Posas (2007) which states that the key role of religion in climate problems comes from 4 main sources contained in religion, namely (1) Its unique traditional function in society, (2) ethical teachings, (3) reach and influence, and (4) the ability to inspire adherents into action. She describes various religious contributions to ethical action on climate change in the following scheme:



Theoretically, the Posas study can help us take a number of concrete steps, including:

1. Conduct an ecologically integrated theological education in the church. It is grounded in the principle that education is about change and improvement. The church may develop a program with the main components containing goals, materials, methods and strategies, and evaluation. It can be applied at all levels, from early childhood to elementary school, including youth, adults and elders. It also applies to congregational groups like family groups, women's groups and men's groups.
2. Encourage the formation of an ecotheological interfaith community with actual programs as a concrete effort in society. For example, the community looks after the springs, the river, food self-sufficiency, produces the food necessary for the family, etc.
3. Encourage church members to do concrete things, such as:
 - a. Adopt an energy-efficient way of life.
 - b. Reduce the need for paper and plastic.
 - c. Use recycled products, following 3R principles: Reuse, Reduce, and Recycle.
 - d. Refuse to consume food from deforestation and land destruction.
 - e. Implement a simple lifestyle, a simple and modest lifestyle like resisting a life of luxury and greed.
4. The church needs to develop cooperative relationships with different parties to form creative and critical relationships with the surrounding environment.

The experience of the Evangelical Church in Kalimantan is now collaborating with indigenous peoples. Before that, the church has gone through a separation with indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples are treated as a distinct group and are opposed to the Church. The church is depicted as a community that is isolated and uprooted from its cultural roots and becomes a social homeless. Indigenous peoples are also described as a community full of weaknesses and suffering: powerless, victims of discrimination, human rights violations and land grabbing. The church has always been called "light" to destroy the "darkness" which are the indigenous peoples. What

is more, the Church is considered superior to the indigenous peoples.

The dichotomy between churches and Indigenous peoples is slowly being addressed for the following reasons:

- a. Indigenous peoples are social entities that can only be distinguished, but cannot be separated from the Church. In Central Kalimantan, almost all church members in rural areas are in fact members of the native community. They regulate their social life through customary law, such as land ownership and marriage. The relationship between the Church and the indigenous peoples is very narrow and cannot be separated. Thus, whatever happens to the indigenous peoples will greatly affect the life of the Church and vice versa.
- b. There are weaknesses, suffering, and poverty among indigenous peoples, but we must also recognize that they have nobility and excellence. For example, indigenous peoples have practised conservation for generations by protecting surrounding forests, lakes, rivers, beaches and natural resources. They already have a community management system and customary laws and regulations to sustain the sustainable use of natural resources. Many reports show that indigenous peoples are very useful in the adaptation and mitigation of climate change with their local wisdom (Norton-Smith, et.al., 2012). As Garner said, 'Indigenous peoples, drawing on an intimate and reciprocal relationship with nature, help people of all cultures to reconnect, often in a spiritual way, with the natural world that supports all human activity' (Gardner, 2010, p. 24).

Therefore, the Church must have a new paradigm to regard indigenous peoples not as the other, but as part of their own body. The Church must recognize these as a competent community, which existed before the existence of the Indonesian state and before the arrival of modern religion and culture. The Church should sit down together to discuss how to achieve Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation in the Central Kalimantan.

RELIGION AS A SOURCE OF HOPE

There is no denying that religion is like the god Janus in Greek mythology, with two faces, constructive and destructive, negative and positive, functional and dysfunctional. But, there is no reason to disregard the functional role of religion to overcome climate justice.

However, in the same way, it is undeniable by religion that hope may spring up. Hope is energy that enables humans to combat despair and, at the same time, to show courage, patience, and perseverance. Those who hope are like pregnant women, says Jürgen Moltmann (2015). The pregnant woman draws strength from the future to endure a strenuous present. Moltmann says:

Hope is anticipated joy; anxiety is anticipated terror. Both are undetermined. Expecting brings the determined into the undetermined of hope and anxiety. Waiting can mean simply to “wait and see,” in which case we contribute nothing to the arrival of the expected. Waiting can also mean expecting, in which case we prepare for what we expect. The expected future is already determining the present. Waiting can also mean watching. I don’t know when it is coming, but it is already at hand. I begin to live in the nearness of the expected and open all my senses to meet the coming. A field of expectation is emerging, in which the expected can always enter.

Religion provides hope that humans have the opportunity to participate in the prevention, inhibition, or mitigation of the negative impacts of climate change. In this way, each one can become an active actor who is aware of conceiving or predicting a bright future for his life. Thus, we have hope that we could construct an alliance powerful enough to rewrite the history of a habitable planet.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Borong, Robert P. (1999), *Etika Bumi Baru*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Emerson, M.O., Monahan, S.C., & Mirola, W.A. (2011), *Religion matters: What sociology teaches us about religion in our world*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

- Gardner G.T. (2010), 'Engaging religions to shape worldviews', in *Worldwatch Institute (ed.), State of the World 2010: Transforming Cultures from Consumerism to Sustainability*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, pp. 23–29.
- Gerten, D. and Bergmann, S. (eds). (2012), *Religion in Environmental and Climate Change: Suffering, Values, and Lifestyles*. London and New York: Continuum.
- Glauber, A. J. and Gunawan, I. (2015). *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>, Gore, A. (2007), *An Inconvenient Truth*, 3rd ed. Bangkok: Matchon.
- Höing, A. (2018), *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 Pebruari 2018).
- Jamieson D. (1996), “Ethics and intentional climate change” in *Climatic Change* 33:323–336. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00142580>
- Johnstone RL. (2004), *Religion in society: a sociology of religion (7th edn)*. Pearson Education, Upper Saddle River, NJ
- Moberg, D. O. (2008), Spirituality and aging: Research and implications. *Journal of Religion, Spirituality & Aging*, 20, 95–134.
- Moltmann, Jürgen (2015), Expectation and Human Flourishing http://faith.yale.edu/sites/default/files/moltmann_expectation_0.pdf Prepared for the Yale Center for Faith & Culture consultation on “Expectation and Human Flourishing,” June 2015.
- Norton-Smith, Kathryn, et.al. (2016), *Climate change and indigenous peoples: a synthesis of current impacts and experiences*. Gen. Tech. Rep. PNWGTR-944. Portland, OR: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station. 136
- Posas, Paula J. (2007), Roles of religion and ethics in addressing climate change, in *Ethics In Science And Environmental Politics Esep, Vol. 2007: 31–49*. doi: 10.3354/esep00080

Weber, Max (1930), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London & Boston: Unwin Hyman, 2012,

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.



ISLAM AND CLIMATE CHANGE:

Khal³fah and the Mandate of Saving the Environment

Faisal Riza

Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, faisalriza@uinsu.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Increasing environmental problems demand the attention of religious communities and their further role in dealing with this global crisis. With an estimated population of 1.8 billion in more than 56 Muslim-majority countries, Muslims make up 23% of the world's population. Muslim countries are generally developing countries and are not the largest carbon-producing countries in the region, but they need to be part of the conversation and the solution to this global crisis. This article describes the role of Islam in providing inspirational guidance in regulating, maintaining, and possibly exploiting the environment. This is a description of a number of Islamic theological doctrines derived from the Qur'an and Hadith in emphasizing its attention to the nature of nature's creation, climate change, humans and the mission of preserving the earth. With the distribution of verses related to environmental issues and earth governance, preservation of the universe, it can be emphasized here that Islam is not just a teaching about faith and ritual worship, more than that, Islam is a religion that is very concerned about the preservation of the universe, threatening the destroyer of the earth. This article argues that the production of Islamic knowledge proposed here can encourage Muslims to become aware of praxis in an effort to save the environment.

Keywords: Islam, Climate change, Human, Khal³fah and Environment

INTRODUCTION

Environmental issues have attracted the attention of many groups such as scientists and theologians. They warn of the need for major changes in the management of the earth and life on it as humans are on a collision course with nature. These problems are in the form of potential damage to planet Earth in the form of ozone depletion, availability of fresh water, depletion of marine life, marine dead zones, forest loss, biodiversity destruction, climate change, and sustainable human population growth.

The global population boom is pushing consumerism as an ethic of individual development and on a large scale the nation-state. The development of the number of people demands the availability of their needs and desires. At least between 1900–2000, this exploitative consumerism corresponded to a three-fold increase in the world's population than during the entire previous history of mankind, increasing from 1.5 to 6.1 billion in just one century. Population increase demands the provision of significant consumption and shows the real economic reality. Intense but geographically and demographically unequal material consumption; rapid population growth as the main driver behind many ecological and even social threats; reassess the role of the growth-rooted economy; reduce greenhouse gases; incentivize renewable energy; protect habitats; restore ecosystems; curb pollution; stop deforestation; limit invasive alien species. The end result of exploding and destroying planet earth to enrich ourselves has caused nature to change course.

In seeking the real reasons that are causing today's environmental problems around the world, many modern scholars blame the philosophical foundations of modern thought. For example, Sterling states that the church is no longer seen as offering parallel intellectual views to scholars such as Galileo, Bacon, Descartes, and Newton. Then, the choice of secularism became necessary. Such a worldview becomes inherently materialistic without the acknowledgment of concepts such as value, passion, feeling, emotion, intuition, and intrinsic purpose. Cartesian duality, which separates mind and body, separates humans from and beyond nature, thereby paving the way for exploitative and manipulative relationships (Sterling, 1990). Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a Muslim thinker, argues that environmental degradation is caused by the spiritual emptiness of modern society and the moral crisis (Nasr, 1990). Nasr has drawn on the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions of the Islamic tradition to debate the

importance of the environment and the responsibility of man to protect it. In the following years, global attention has shifted from sustainability and loss of biodiversity to the urgent and serious threat posed by human-caused climate change.

This situation then demands the role of religion to involve itself in assisting its people in terms of ethical life that has values, is more sympathetic. In recent years, in the Christian West, studies on the role of religion in tackling climate change have increased. For example, (Allison, 2015; Kilburn, 2014; Murphy, C., Tembo, M., Phiri, A., Yerokun, O., & Grummell, 2016; Smith & Leiserowitz, 2013). Scholars argue that there is a fundamental need to understand the role of religion in order to fully understand the cultural dynamics of climate change (Hulme, 2017; Jenkins, Willis, Evan Berry, 2018).

Much of the burden of climate change is borne by Muslim-majority countries, but their cultural awareness and climate action is often very limited. The attention of modern Muslim scholars on climate change can be traced from Nasr's 1960s article which emphasized how Islam as a comprehensive worldview can be re-examined as a guide to reading the universe. Modernity produces spiritual emptiness and human moral crisis, including in Muslim society (Nasr, 1990). In fact, since the early days of the Islamic world, the formula for Islamic attention is integrative with cosmology, with nature (Nasr, 1978). This model then made Islam progress and develop. Concern for the environment, then followed by other scholars such as (Dien, 1997), The reproduction of knowledge of Islamic doctrine encourages the attention of its people to the preservation of the universe (Haq, 2001; Hussain, 2007; Saniotis, 2012). The Islamic doctrine of humans as caliphs (substitutes for God on earth) has created a variety of environmental movements among the younger generation (Nilan, 2021). The stretch can be read in many places like Muslims in Europe and America (Hancock, 2017), and in Indonesia (Amri, 2014).

Indeed, even though the Islamic doctrine on the environment is sourced from the Koran and Hadith which is uniform, but in the study there is no uniform interpretation of climate change among Muslims. Muslims have come up with a different approach to climate change (Koehrsen, 2021). For example, the effect of industrialization on the natural environment in the Middle East in general is not much different from other parts of the world since industrial culture has taken over traditional culture leading to the prevalence

of materialistic values over intrinsic (Dien, 1997). In addition, In Indonesia, the problem of deforestation that causes extreme weather changes is more threatening than any other aspect of the climate change issue.

Apart from the diversity of interpretations, the volume of involvement of Muslims is relatively small in public campaigns to raise greater awareness about climate change and disseminate pro-environmental interpretations of Islam. On 17–18 August 2015, Muslim intellectuals from various countries gathered in Istanbul, Turkey, to attend the International Islamic Climate Change Symposium (*Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change*). The symposium came out with the Islamic Declaration on Climate Change which essentially emphasized the importance of responding to Climate Change based on Islamic values and teachings. These Muslim scholars emphasize that today's climate change is the result of people's own actions and therefore call upon billions of Muslims in the world to play a role in reducing greenhouse emissions and commit to the use of renewable energy sources. These scientists also emphasized that the human species which is supposed to carry out what has been entrusted by the rulers of the earth, has become the main cause of the destruction and destruction of other creatures on this planet. The current level of climate change has also reached a point where it should not be allowed to proceed if we do not want the balance of nature to be lost immediately. As humans, we have disrupted the balance of nature created by Allah. The real threat of climate change is the result of human actions that have disrupted the balance of nature. One of the main reasons behind this is the need for fossil-based fuels which are a major contributor to wealth for several Muslim countries in the world.

The appeal reiterated that the role of humans as *khalifah* *al-Ard* (ruler on earth) is to protect and care for the earth. What God has entrusted to humans, is to maintain and care for the earth and all its contents so that they exist, and are not exploited for the sake of progress and greed. As part of the earth's population, Muslims must also be responsible for the preservation and continuity of the earth. As we know, Muslim-populated countries are among the largest emitters. Countries with Muslim-majority populations also have the worst air pollution.

In this context, then, this article provides a description of the role of religion in the maintenance, regulation, and even exploitation of

the earth, through exploring a number of Islamic doctrines as ethical guidelines. This article is part of an effort to increase the role of Religion in dealing with climate issues. By referring to and analyzing the texts in the Qur'an and Hadith, this article wants to emphasize that Islam has been very strong in providing ethical guidance on how humans maintain, preserve, and prevent the destruction of the universe. The power of this doctrine can be the driving force for how believers apply to the universe.

ISLAM AND THE CREATION OF NATURE

In understanding how Islam provides ethical guidance in mitigating environmental damage, it is better to start from understanding Islam as a religion and its teachings regarding the creation of nature. Islamic values provide a comprehensive solution to the current environmental problems faced by mankind. Islam has a rich tradition of highlighting the importance of protecting the environment and conserving natural resources. As a religion of the Abrahamic tradition after Judaism and Christianity, Islam has its roots in environmental practices that are sourced from the Qur'an and the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad. Prophet Muhammad is the Prophet of Islam and as the Messenger of Allah (Rasulullah), He was born in 570 AD in Mecca and died in 632 AD in Medina, Saudi Arabia.

To understand the construction of Islamic teachings, it is better to understand three important aspects of this teaching. Firstly, Islam. In the context of the verb, it is described in what is usually described as the five pillars; a) *Syahadah*, the martyrdom is a testifying statement that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah the Lord; b) *salat*, prayer ritual five times a day; c) *zakat*, the annual payment of certain taxes; d) *Shiyam*, fasting in the month of Ramadan; e) *Hajj*, the annual worship at the Kaaba of Mecca, which is obligatory for a Muslim to perform at least once in a lifetime for those who have the financial means.

Second, *Iman* is described by the Prophet Muhammad as knowing with the heart, speaking with the tongue, and applying it with gestures (behavior). This requires a confession of faith in God, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Days, and the acceptance that life in all its expressions comes from a divine source.

Third, *Ihsan* is described as worshiping Allah as if you see Him, knowing that even if you do not see Him, He sees you. This goes far beyond ritual prayers; and every good deed done by a believer is

seen as an act of worship. This is commonly expressed by Muslims as doing what pleases Allah, who is always there, ever vigilant.

Islam as a religion is basically very close conceptually to environmental issues. For example, said “Sharia”. Sharia is interpreted as a legal system, the management of life in accordance with the source of teachings, namely the Qur’an and Hadith. The term “sharia” basically, etymologically has a strong connotation with the environment. Sharia means road in Arabic, the concept refers to the path through which wild animals come to drink in their water bodies to quench their thirst and sustain life. This is the path that leads to where the water of life flows without stopping. Sharia is the basic concept of Islam, namely the law. Islamic religious law is seen as an expression of God’s commandments for Muslims and, in its application, is a system of obligations which all Muslims are obliged based on their religious beliefs. The law represents the path of conduct ordained by God that guides Muslims towards the practical expression of religious belief in this world and the purpose of God’s mercy in the world to come.

The Qur’an confirms that Allah is the creator (Khaliq) of the universe. Qur’an 59 verse 24: “And he is Allah the creator and the artist ...”. Meanwhile, the universe is a creation (khalq), the word khalq is spread in about two hundred and sixty-one verses, where this word is used in various grammatical forms derived from the root “kh l q”. These verses contain references to humans, the nature of the Earth, forests and trees, fish in the ocean, birds in the air, sun, stars and sky.

The first revelation of the Koran to the Apostles uses this word in its verb form for dramatic effect, “Read in the name of your Lord who created, created man from a clot of blood” (96:1). Nature as a creation is referred to as signs (verse). ‘Ayat’ means sign, symbol or proof of divinity, proof of God’s existence. Therefore, Nasr explained that Muslim thinkers refer to the cosmic or ontological Koran, they see on the faces of every letter and word of the creatures of the cosmic Koran, they remain fully aware of the fact that the Koran refers to natural phenomena and events in the human psyche as verses, and for them the form of nature is literally Allah’s verse (Nasr, 1978). As the Qur’an says, “Indeed there are signs on the earth”. for people for sure; and in you. Don’t you see?” (51:20, 21).

In addition to Nature as a divine sign, nature comes from the goodness of God. For a Muslim, nature is a blessing, a gift that is

blessed with the gift of Allah to change in any way with the aim of achieving ethical values. Because nature is the work of Allah, His verses or signs, and the means of His goal, namely absolute goodness. The Qur'an says about these things (16:65-69): Allah sends down water from the sky and with it Allah sends down water from the dead earth to life. There must be a sign in it for those who hear. There is a guide for you in cattle. From their entrails, from between filth and blood, we give you whole milk to drink, easy for the drinker to swallow. And from dates and grapevines you get both intoxicating drinks and healthy food. There must be a way to it for people who use their minds. God created the bee: 'Build a dwelling in the mountains and in the trees, and also in the structures erected by man. Then eat of all kinds of fruit and follow the path of your Lord, which has been made easy for you to follow. From those came drinks of various colors, containing medicine for humans. Verily there is a sign of entry for those who reflect.

The universe we inhabit is a sign of God's creation like our environment. He comes from one source and is bound by only one purpose, namely to serve the divine will. The cosmic to subatomic ties are deep ecology of Islam but it is not an equal relationship as we can see in the hierarchies of the food chain which is dominated by humans. While the primary relationship is between the Creator and His creation, it is the Creator Himself who determines that between man and the rest of creation as defined by the Qur'an.

CALIPH AND THE MISSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

The Qur'an cites that the practice of corruption on earth is caused by excessive human exploitation and forgetting the principle of balance. "Corruption has appeared on land and in the sea due to the actions of human hands, so that Allah may feel for them some of the (results of) their actions, so that they return to the right path (Surah Ar-Rm: 41). Damage has been seen on land and in the seas such as drought, lack of rain, many diseases and epidemics, all of which are caused by the disobedience of human beings, so that they may be punished for some of their deeds in the world, so that they may repent to Allah and return to Him. By abandoning disobedience, then their condition will improve and their affairs will become straight.

Therefore, the stand point of mitigating the damage to the natural environment can be started from the concept of the caliph,

that humans are substitutes for God in the affairs of maintaining and preserving the universe. Here, the role of believers is as the holder of the mandate to protect the earth, guard the environment in order to uphold the value of monotheism, the oneness of God.

Indeed, the creation of the universe was intended for humans, "He is the One who created everything on earth for you ..." (2:28). Human presence on earth is intended as a *Khal³fatull±h f± al-ardh*, God's representative, a substitute for the maintainer and regulator of the universe. "Remember when your Lord said to the angels: "Indeed I want to make a caliph on earth." They said: "Why do you want to make (caliphate) on earth a person who will do mischief on it and shed blood, even though we always exalt with praise You and purify You?" God said: "Indeed I know what you do not know." (Surat al-Baqarah/2:30). God created everything for man and appointed him as God's representative (Khal³fah) on this earth: "It is He who made you vicegerents on this earth" (6:167).

The whole of the creation of this universe is in order to affirm that Allah is one and only, he is the source of all things. The concept of oneness is known as Tawhid. Tawhid is the doctrine of the oneness of God and its essence is contained in the creed of every Muslim and is a reminder of faith. Testimony that "there is no God but God" (l±il±ha illa All±h) and is the basic statement of the Oneness of the Creator from which everything else flows. The second half of this creed is "Muhammad is the messenger of Allah" (Muhammad Raslull±h). "He is God, the Absolute Oneness, the God of the Eternal Sustainer of all" (112:1, 2). This is a testimony to the unity of all creation and to its structure the natural order which is part of human nature: "To Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. God encompasses all things" (4:125). This is the cornerstone of a holistic approach in Islam because it emphasizes the interconnectedness of the natural order.

The Qur'an describes such creation (55:1-5): The Most Merciful taught the Qur'an, He created man and taught him clear expression. The sun and moon both operate with precision. The stars and trees all bow down. He establishes heaven and establishes balance. All creation has order and purpose and is in dynamic balance. If the sun, moon, stars had not bent themselves, that is, served their design purposes, it would be impossible for life to function on earth.

As a caliph, one must take all necessary steps to ensure that the entrusted property is passed on to the next generation in the

purest possible form. According to Islam, every human being is a guardian of nature, and must live in harmony with other creatures. It is the duty of all Muslims to respect, maintain and care for the environment.

All kinds of corruption, including environmental corruption, which includes industrial pollution, environmental damage, and reckless exploitation and management of natural resources, are not liked by Allah. Allah says in the Qur'an: "And Allah does not like those who do mischief" (Surah Al Ma'eda, verse 64), And do not do mischief in the earth after it is arranged: that is what better for you, if you believe" (Q.S. Al-A'rāf: 85), Eat and drink: But do not waste it excessively, because Allah does not like those who waste (Surah Al-A'raf 7:31). "And do good as Allah has done good to you. And do not try to do mischief on the earth. Allah does not like corrupt people", (Surah Al-Qasas 28:77) "O son of Adam, dress well whenever you worship, and eat and drink (as we allow) but do not overdo it: God does not like people too much." (Sura Al-A'rāf 7:31). In short, environmental preservation is a believer's obligation as well as a social obligation, and not an option. The exploitation of certain natural resources is directly related to accountability and resource maintenance.

Hadith or traditions of the Prophet Muhammad also discuss many aspects of the environment including resource conservation, land reclamation, and environmental cleanliness. Prophet Muhammad forbade excessive consumption and luxury, and encouraged a balanced attitude in all walks of life.

The most popular hadith about the environment states "The earth is green and beautiful and Allah has appointed you His servant on it". This hadith reaffirms the doctrine in the Qur'an that humans have been given the responsibility to protect the natural environment. The Prophet clearly forbade the destruction of trees and plants even during times of war as long as their existence remains favorable to the enemy. The Prophet gave a high level of importance to sustainable land cultivation, waste minimization, ethics towards animals, conservation of natural resources and protection of wildlife. Some of the words of the Prophet about environmental sustainability are: "This world is beautiful and green, and verily Allah, Most High, has made you His steward in it, and He saw how you set yourself free." (H.R. Muslim). "If a Muslim plants a tree or sows a seed, and then a bird, or a human or an animal eats it, it is considered a charity

(shadaqah) for him.” (H.R. Bukhari). “Whoever plants a tree and takes care of it diligently until it ripens and bears fruit, he will get a reward” (H.R. Musnad).

The Prophet realized that natural resources should not be overexploited or misused. To protect land, forests, and wildlife, the Prophet created inviolable zones, known as *Haram* and *Hima*, where resources should not be touched. Haram areas are created around wells and water sources to protect groundwater from over-exploration. Meanwhile, *hima* is applied to wildlife and forestry and designates areas of land where grazing and logging are restricted, or where certain animal species (such as camels) are protected.

The Prophet Muhammad established the *hima* in the south of Medina and forbade hunting within a four-mile radius and the destruction of trees or plants within a twelve-mile radius. The creation of an inviolable zone demonstrates the importance placed by the Prophet Muhammad on the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of wildlife and agricultural land.

The Prophet Muhammad said, “Whoever revives dead soil, there will be a reward in it, and whatever the creatures that seek food from it eats it will be counted as charity from it.” The Prophet on another occasion said, “It is not a Muslim who plants a tree or sows a field for humans, birds or animals to eat, but it will be counted as a charity from him”; and, “If a person plants a tree, then no human or creature of Allah will eat it without being counted as alms from it”. This proves the importance of the Prophet in the early days of Islam having given land reclamation and equal rights of all God’s creatures to benefit from the earth’s resources.

The concept of sustainable development in Islam can be defined as a balanced and simultaneous realization of consumer welfare, economic efficiency, achievement of social justice, and ecological balance within the framework of an evolutionary knowledge-based model.

The Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad states: “There will be no damage and no damage”. The right to benefit from important environmental elements and resources such as water, minerals, soil, forests, fish and wildlife, arable land, air and sunshine is a right shared by all members of society. Each individual has the right to benefit from shared resources to determine the level of needs. The needs must be distinguished from wants and their impact on the environment.

Utilization of natural resources (ni'matullāh, God's gift) is a sacred trust instilled in mankind. Man is only a caliph, (manager, maintainer) not owner, beneficiary and not waster. Thus, Muslims in particular must use the earth responsibly for their benefit, protect and preserve it honestly, use it wisely and moderately, and pass it on to future generations in excellent condition. This includes appreciating its beauty and surrendering it in a way that embodies worship to Allah.

Utilization of all natural resources such as land, water, air, fire (energy), forests, oceans, is considered as a common right and property of all mankind. Since Man is Khalīfatullāh (God's representative) on earth, he must take every precaution to ensure the interests and rights of others, and regard his control over a given piece of land as shared ownership with the next generation.

WATER, POLLUTION, AND CONSERVATION

“ ... and (remember) when Moses asked for water for his people, then We said: “Strike the rock with your stick,” and twelve springs of water gushed from it. Indeed, each tribe has known its (each) drinking place. Eat and drink from Allah's sustenance, and do not roam the earth doing mischief...” (Surah al-Baqarah: 60)

In Sharia, there is a responsibility placed on upstream farms to consider downstream users. A farm beside the river is forbidden to monopolize its water. After retaining a reasonable amount of water for the crop, the farmer must release the rest downstream. Furthermore, if water is not sufficient for all farms along the river, the needs of the old farm must be met before the new farm is allowed to irrigate. This reflects the sustainable use of water based on safe results.

Water also plays another socio-religious function: cleansing the body and clothes of all dirt, grime, and purification so that mankind can look presentable at all times. Only after being cleaned with clean water (colorless, odorless, and tasteless), Muslims are allowed to pray. One can only pray in a place that has been cleaned. In view of these facts, Islam emphasizes the prevention of pollution of water resources. Urinating (removing waste water into the watercourse) and washing or bathing in stagnant water is forbidden in Islam.

The Prophet said: “No one should bathe in still water, when he is unclean”.

The teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasize the proper use of water without wasting it. The Prophet said: “Do not urinate even if you are in a flowing river”. He also said: “Whoever reproduces (more than three), then he does wrong and unjust”.

CONCLUSION

This article has shown that there is no doubt that Islam through its doctrines contained in the Qur’an and Hadith has provided ethical guidelines regarding environmental management and tackling the impacts of climate change and damage. Indeed, this article as well as most of the literature on Islam, the environment, and climate change is theoretical and focuses on Islamic environmental ethics. Yet ecological problems are growing and affecting a wider part of the global Muslim community.

Therefore, future studies on environment and climate change are expected to explore different and developing channels in different regions of the world. In particular, it focuses on how specific understandings of Islam interact with other variables for example, regional climate change vulnerability to inform Muslim perceptions of climate change. In particular, the movement can be developed more massively on a national and local scale with an important impact on the existence of the environment among the community. In addition, it is also necessary to pioneer a benchmark project for environmentally friendly houses of worship, for example, which can also help create greater awareness about the environment.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allison, E.A. (2015). The spiritual significance of glaciers in an age of climate change. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews:Climate Change* 6.5, 493–508.

Amri, U. (2014). From theology to a praxis of “eco-jihad”: The role of religious civil society organizations in combating climate change in Indonesia. In & R. H.-D. (Eds. . R. G. Veldman, A. Szasz (Ed.), *How the world’s religions are responding to climate change: Social scientific investigations* (1st ed., pp. 75–93). Routledge.

- Dien, M.I. (1997). Islam and the environment: Theory and practice. *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 18(1), 47–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1361767970180106>
- Hancock, R. (2017). *Islamic Environmentalism*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315543062>
- Haq, S.N. (2001). Islam and ecology: Toward retrieval and reconstruction. *Daedalus*, 130(4), 141–177.
- Hulme, M. (2017). Climate change and the significance of religion. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 52(28), 15.
- Hussain, M. (2007). *Islam and Climate Change: Perspectives & Engagement*. March, 1–38.
- Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change*. (n.d.). Retrieved July 26, 2022, from <http://islamicclimatedeclaration.org/>
- Jenkins, Willis, Evan Berry, and L.B.K. (2018). Religion and climate change. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 43(1), 85–108.
- Kilburn, H. W. (2014). Religion and foundations of American public opinion towards global climate change. *Environmental Politics*, 23(3), 473–489.
- Koehrsen, J. (2021). Muslims and climate change: How Islam, Muslim organizations, and religious leaders influence climate change perceptions and mitigation activities. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 12(3), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.702>
- Murphy, C., Tembo, M., Phiri, A., Yerokun, O., & Grummell, B. (2016). Adapting to climate change in shifting landscapes of belief. *Climatic Change*, 134(1–2), 101–114. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-015-1498-8>
- Nasr, S.H. (1978). *Islamic Cosmological Doctrine*. Thames & Hudson.
- Nasr, S.H. (1990). *Islamic art and spirituality*. Suny Press.
- Nilan, P. (2021). Muslim youth environmentalists in Indonesia. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 24(7), 925–940. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2020.1782864>
- Saniotis, A. (2012). Muslims and ecology: fostering Islamic environmental ethics. *Contemporary Islam*, 6(2), 155–171. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-011-0173-8>

Smith, N., & Leiserowitz, A. (2013). American evangelicals and global warming. *Global Environmental Change*, 23(5), 1009-1017.

Sterling, S.R. (1990). Towards an Ecological World View. In J.R.E. & J.G. Engel (Ed.), *Ethics of environment and development: Global challenge, international response* (pp. 77-86).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Faisal Riza was born on June 7th, 1982. He works now as lecturer in Fakultas Ilmu Sosial in Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan. He studied his doctoral in Filsafat Islam Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan in 2022.



KEARIFAN LOKAL – MODAL MODERASI BERAGAMA DI BUMI ANGKOLA

Agustina Damanik

ABSTRAK

Kearifan lokal adalah harta karun yang tidak boleh diabaikan atas dasar kebijakan apa pun, sebab kearifan lokal adalah jati diri dan media perekat perwujudan keharmonisan di dalam perbedaan paham keagamaan. Setidaknya ada empat hal yang bisa kita simpulkan tentang pentingnya kearifan lokal. *Pertama*, masyarakat primordial adalah komunitas yang menekankan adat istiadat leluhur, berbaur saling membutuhkan, dan menjaga nilai-nilai kebajikan yang ada dan dilestarikan. *Kedua*, moderasi beragama berbasis kearifan lokal merupakan kesederhanaan, kepastian, dan keseimbangan. Pasti karena masyarakat lokal sudah memiliki kultur dan memahami manfaat nilai-nilai kebudayaan lokal di dalam relasi kehidupan bermasyarakat. *Ketiga*, intensitas relasi dan komunikasi dengan cara kekeluargaan menjadi wadah keterbukaan dan penangkal rasa kecurigaan. Saling terbuka dan memahami perbedaan adalah mazhab filosofis masyarakat tradisional. Jika gagasan keagamaan membawa pesan kemaslahatan masyarakat luas tentu kecurigaan menjadi rendah, fanatisme menjadi terbuka, ekstremis menjadi dialogis, dan radikalisme sebatas radikal saja. Seperti halnya di Tanah Angkola, Tapanuli Selatan, yang memiliki kearifan lokal yang sering disebut *Dalihan Na Tolu*, yaitu 'tungku berkaki tiga' yang memiliki makna filosofi mendalam tentang wawasan sosial kultural yang menyangkut masyarakat dan budaya Batak. *Dalihan Na Tolu* menjadi kerangka yang meliputi hubungan-hubungan kerabat darah dan hubungan perkawinan yang mempertalikan satu kelompok.

Kata Kunci: Moderasi Beragama, Kearifan Lokal, Suku Batak Angkola

PEMBAHASAN

Moderasi beragama berbasis kearifan lokal merupakan kesederhanaan dan kepastian. Pasti karena masyarakat lokal sudah terbiasa memiliki dan memahami manfaat nilai-nilai kearifan lokal di dalam relasi kehidupan bermasyarakat. Penekanan pada kearifan lokal tidak bertanya “apa agamamu?”, namun “apa yang bisa kami bantu untuk mencapai tujuan individu secara simbiosis mutualisme?” Segala kreasi Tuhan Yang Mahakuasa memiliki hak dan kewajiban yang sama dalam realitas sosialnya. Kajian tentang banyaknya kasus kekerasan atas nama agama disebabkan adanya ketegangan dan rasa saling mencurigai yang begitu kuat di antara masyarakat beragama Kristen dan Islam, serta kurang menjiwai apa arti agama itu sendiri bagi kehidupan manusia.

Perbedaan agama tidak memutuskan rasa persatuan dan persaudaraan di Tapanuli Selatan, khususnya di Tanah Angkola. Isi narasi moderasi beragama sebenarnya bermaksud merawat kemajemukan dan tidak mengesampingkan modal sosial. Sikap moderat sebagai modal sosial dan merupakan *value* yang ada, dimiliki oleh individu maupun kelompok yang dapat menjadikan mereka saling memahami dan menghormati. Kesadaran akan kearifan lokal sebagai modal sosial terus dibangun dengan mengedepankan sikap moderat. “Kearifan Lokal Sintuwu Maroso sebagai Simbol Moderasi Beragama” merupakan artikel yang ditulis oleh Muhammad Nur yang mengemukakan bahwa budaya lokal turut serta membangun dinamika moderasi beragama di Poso. Pemahaman tentang *Piamo* (orang terdahulu) merupakan bagian dari nilai budaya leluhur mereka yang telah diwariskan. Budaya tersebut mengandung nilai luhur yang bermanfaat dalam prinsip kehidupan masyarakat dalam tradisi *Mesale* (gotong-royong) misalnya. Prinsip *mosintuwu*, yaitu perasaan turut merasakan kesusahan orang lain dengan cara memberi sesuatu berupa uang dan sembako. Tujuan dasarnya adalah kebersamaan yang merupakan salah satu bangunan relasi sosial. *Sintuwu Maroso* merupakan budaya lokal atau kearifan lokal masyarakat Poso yang sangat majemuk dan menjadi bagian dari moderasi beragama. Kearifan lokal tersebut mengandung nilai-nilai luhur yang sangat bermanfaat dalam kehidupan sosial masyarakat

dalam membangun dan menjaga kualitas hidup harmonis bagi warganya dan nilai budaya di dalamnya.

Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, mantan Menteri Agama, mengatakan bahwa moderasi beragama merupakan sikap menahan tindak kekerasan, atau menjauhi keekstreman dalam praktik beragama. Sikap demikian sangat penting dicanangkan sebagai kesamaan sudut pandang dalam menjalankan keagamaannya masing-masing. Moderasi menjadi cara menarik ke belakang praktik beragama agar sesuai dengan esensinya, dan agar agama benar-benar berfungsi menjaga. Ada beberapa perekat moderasi beragama di Tapanuli Selatan, khususnya bumi Angkola di antaranya.

HUBUNGAN KEKERABATAN KELUARGA

Tapanuli Selatan, khusus Tanah Angkola, kental dengan adat istiadat yang dikenal dengan *Dalihan Na Tolu* atau 'tungku berkaki tiga' yang memiliki kedudukan fungsional sebagai kontruksi sosial yang terdiri atas tiga hal yang menjadi dasar bersama. *Hormat namarmora* (hormat kepada keluarga pihak istri). *Elek marboru* (sikap membujuk/mengayomi perempuan) dan *manat mardongan tubu* (sikap berhati-hati kepada teman semarga). Bentuk kearifan lokal inilah yang membuat Tapanuli Selatan menjadi salah satu wilayah yang harmonis dalam menjalankan prinsip agamanya masing-masing karena diikat oleh adat istiadat yang terus dijaga dan dilestarikan. Hal menarik lain dan juga sangat unik dalam mewujudkan toleransi umat beragama di Tapanuli Selatan, khusus Tanah Angkola, adalah kearifan lokal masyarakat setempat seperti tradisi *marpege-pege*, *martahi*, dan *marsialapari* yang terbukti dapat menjalin keharmonisan masyarakat yang ada di Tapanuli Selatan khususnya. Karena ada kesediaan untuk saling membantu dan saling membutuhkan di dalamnya.

Letak rumah penduduk di Tapanuli Selatan yang berbaur (tanpa berdasarkan kelompok agama) menjadi gambaran bahwa masyarakat berbaur dan tidak terkotak-kotak. Tingginya kesadaran akan sesama ciptaan Tuhan menjadi kekuatan dalam merengkuh perbedaan. Sesama penduduk saling menghormati dan saling mendukung karena faktor hubungan kekeluargaan dan faktor adat istiadat setempat. Dalam menjalani kehidupan sehari-hari, masyarakat melakukan interaksi sosial baik antara individu satu dan individu lain yang dilakukan secara bersahaja tanpa perasaan canggung dan tidak menampakkan perbedaan di antara mereka. Seperti halnya

yang dikemukakan oleh Sutrisna, bahwa masyarakat majemuk akan berperilaku sosial dengan pedoman sosial yang dijunjung tinggi serta diterapkan dalam pergaulan sehari-hari di bawah naungan payung kearifan lokal yang dijadikan sebagai suatu rangkaian dalam moral, norma, nilai sosial, dan aturan yang bersumber dari aspek budaya masyarakat dan dipakai sebagai acuan dalam berinteraksi antarmanusia dalam masyarakat majemuk.

Sutrisna menandakan bahwa kearifan lokal memiliki kontribusi yang signifikan dalam menyatukan hati, pikiran, dan gerakan masyarakat yang menghasilkan kemajuan bidang kehidupan yang manfaatnya dapat dirasakan seluruh umat manusia. Kelenturan sikap dan mengekspresikan ajaran agama dengan inklusif adalah upaya menjawab keseimbangan yang diakibatkan pengaruh globalisasi. Dengan senantiasa berpegang pada “tradisionalisme” dan kearifan lokal, Pesantren Tebuireng mampu berlayar di tengah tantangan modernitas tanpa harus tercabut dari akar-akar kebudayaan sendiri.

Dengan demikian, kearifan lokal sangat strategis dalam perwujudan moderasi sebagaimana Novianus Isang dan Silpanus Dalmasius tandaskan bahwa implementasi kearifan lokal dapat digunakan sebagai rujukan untuk mengembangkan praktik moderasi beragama. Diseminasi moderasi beragama berbasis kearifan lokal juga relevan dan telah dilakukan dalam praktik belajar-mengajar di sekolah formal. Pembelajaran tematik tentang kearifan lokal dan moderasi beragama telah maju berkembang dari pendekatan konvensional kepada pendekatan integratif fungsional.

IMPLEMENTASI KESADARAN CIPTAAN TUHAN

Pada konteks Tapanuli Selatan, prinsip kesadaran bahwa semua adalah ciptaan Tuhan termanifestasi dalam bentuk adat istiadat yang kental bagi masyarakat setempat: *marpege-pege*, *marsialapari*, dan *martahi*. Ketiga adat istiadat ini menyeru untuk saling menolong, merasa dalam suka maupun duka, dan juga istilah *Dalihan Na Tolu*.

KEARIFAN LOKAL SUKU BATAK ANGKOLA

Moderasi beragama di Tapanuli Selatan dapat dilihat dari berbagai unsur aktivitas masyarakat yaitu moderasi beragama dalam sikap dan perilaku pemuka agama yang menjaga baik sejarah dan hubungan kekeluargaan, pembentukan serikat masyarakat, bahasa

komunikasi, kegiatan seni budaya, dan kesadaran sebagai ciptaan Tuhan dalam kohesi masyarakat.

Salah satu wujud moderasi beragama yang berbentuk kearifan lokal yang ada di Tapanuli Selatan adalah dengan adanya budaya *marpege-pege* yang dilakukan ketika ada hajatan pernikahan untuk anak laki-laki khususnya, biasanya *marpege-pege* dilakukan ketika ada anak laki-laki yang ingin meminang pujaan hatinya untuk dipersunting menjadi istri. *Marpege-pege* ini merupakan tradisi mengumpulkan uang dan bisa juga diartikan dengan kegiatan tolong-menolong bagi keluarga calon mempelai laki-laki, baik secara materiel maupun non-materiel, dan ini merupakan suatu bagian dari adat istiadat di Tapanuli Selatan. *Marpege-pege* ini bukan hanya diperuntukkan bagi keluarga melainkan juga tetangga, baik yang beragama Islam maupun beragama Kristen.

Marsialapari juga merupakan perwujudan moderasi beragama berbentuk kearifan lokal yang ada di TaBagSel (Tapanuli bagian Selatan). *Marsialapari* berasal dari kata *alap* dan *ari*. *Alap* artinya 'ambil' sedangkan *ari* artinya 'hari', yang ditambahkan awalan kata kerja sehingga menjadi *marsi*. *Marsi* artinya 'saling', sama-sama. Dalam bahasa Indonesia sederhana, *marsialapari* adalah 'saling mengambil hari' atau 'gotong royong bergiliran'. Dalam kegiatan tolong-menolong dan gotong royong ini, masyarakat secara sukarela saling membantu saudara ataupun tetangga yang membutuhkan bantuan dengan rasa gembira, yang biasanya dilakukan di sawah atau kebun, serta dilakukan masyarakat Muslim dan Kristen yang ada di Tapanuli Selatan khususnya.

Tidak hanya itu, moderasi beragama juga bisa kita lihat dari adanya gedung masjid dibangun berdekatan dengan gereja. Hal tersebut unik dan menarik, sehingga Erman S. Saragih mengemukakan bahwa kearifan lokal sebagai wadah perekat dan pemersatu perbedaan paham agama di Tapanuli bagian Selatan. Intensitas relasi dan komunikasi kekeluargaan menjadi penangkal rasa kecurigaan. Sikap saling terbuka dan memahami perbedaan adalah dasar filosofis masyarakat tradisional Tapanuli Selatan. Jika kecurigaan rendah, peluang terjadinya kekerasan atas nama agama pun rendah.

Demikian halnya dengan Tapanuli Selatan yang terdiri dari suku Batak Angkola dan memiliki tradisi yang unik. Mengapa moderasi beragama berbasis kearifan lokal perlu dikonstruksi dan dijadikan model terapan pada kasus kekerasan terhadap pemeluk

agama? Tawaran argumentatif tulisan ini adalah bahwa kearifan lokal sebagai media strategis untuk mewujudkan masyarakat moderat-harmonis di dalam realitas perbedaan kepercayaan agama. Masyarakat primordial sebenarnya adalah masyarakat yang berbaur, menekankan adat istiadat, dan menjaga nilai-nilai kebajikan yang telah ditanamkan sejak zaman leluhur mereka.

Nilai tersebut mengedepankan rasa saling membutuhkan, saling menerima, saling menghormati, dan penuh kepekaan bahwa mereka sama-sama makhluk ciptaan Tuhan. Gagasan tersebut relevan sebagaimana dimensi nilai-nilai Pancasila, yaitu memodelkan pola pikir dan sikap menghormati serta meluhurkan berbagai aspek distingtif dalam keanekaragaman beragama.

Marga yang sama bisa menjadi alat mediasi yang efektif untuk setiap persoalan di masyarakat, termasuk di dalamnya persoalan keberagaman. Kearifan lokal yang terwujud dalam praktik-praktik moderasi beragama yang aktif pada berbagai daerah tampak masih berjalan dengan baik. Hal tersebut menyatakan bahwa tradisi dan kepercayaan saling berkaitan dan dalam upaya mewujudkan nilai-nilai hidup yang harmoni. Esensi praktik moderasi yang masih ditemukan di masyarakat tercipta secara alami dan dijalankan tanpa rasa canggung merupakan inti dari praktik kerukunan beragama. Pada komunitas yang berbeda kepercayaan masih ditemukan sikap keagamaan yang seimbang. Dengan demikian, kearifan lokal adalah piranti unik dalam menguatkan nilai-nilai moderasi beragama. Kadang kala, tantangan normatif lahir dari diksi moderasi beragama itu sendiri. Masyarakat pada umumnya salah memahami makna moderasi beragama dengan menuduhnya sebagai agenda untuk meliberasi agama.

Semangat moderasi beragama berbasis kearifan lokal adalah sebuah keniscayaan. Sikap moderat yang menghormati, kesetaraan, dan harmonis adalah indikator akan terwujudnya sebuah kehidupan yang penuh dengan keterbukaan, saling berinteraksi, dan terjalinnya rasa saling membutuhkan dalam lingkup kebinekaan. Antara ajaran agama dan budaya jadi berkolaborasi dan menjadi modal utama dalam membangun sikap moderat antarsesama umat, warga masyarakat, dan antarumat beragama.

KESIMPULAN

Modal moderasi beragama di bumi Angkola adalah dengan kearifan lokal seperti *Dalihan Na Tolu*, atau 'tungku yang tiga', yang

memiliki filosofi yang sangat dalam, di mana ketiganya ini saling berkaitan satu sama lain. *Dalihan Na Tolu* menjadi kerangka yang meliputi hubungan-hubungan kerabat darah dan perkawinan yang mempertalikan satu kelompok.

Dan, setidaknya ada tiga kegiatan yang bisa menjadi perekat keharmonisan antarmasyarakat dan antarumat beragama, di antaranya: *marpege-pege*, *marsialapari*, dan *martahi*. Ketiganya sering dilakukan oleh masyarakat di Tapanuli bagian Selatan hingga saat ini. Ketiga kegiatan ini dianggap cukup berjalan untuk menciptakan kerukunan antarumat beragama di Tapanuli Selatan.



LOCAL WISDOM – AN ASSET OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN THE LAND OF ANGKOLA

AGUSTINA DAMANIK

ABSTRACT

Local wisdom is a treasure that cannot be ignored by any policy since it is the society's identity and an adhesive medium that binds the different religious views that exist together harmoniously in a society. There are four points that we can conclude regarding the importance of local wisdom: Firstly, primordial societies are communities that emphasize on ancestral customs, intermingle with one another, and maintain existing and preserved virtues. Secondly, religious moderation which is based on local wisdom means simplicity, certainty, and balance because the local communities already have their own culture, and understand the benefits of local cultural values in social life. Third, the familial intensity of relations and communication is a means of openness and an antidote to suspicion. Being open to each other and understanding differences that exist in a community is a philosophical school of traditional society. If religious ideas carry messages for the benefit of the wider community, then suspicion will be low; fanaticism will become open; extremism will become dialogic, and radicalism will only stay radical.

The local wisdom that exists in the southern part of Angkola, Tapanuli is called *Dalihan Na Tolu*, or 'the three burners', which has a deep philosophical meaning in relation to the socio-

cultural insights in Batak society and culture. *Dalihan Na Tolu* becomes a framework that includes blood relations and marital relations that tie the group together.

Keywords: Religious Moderation, Local Wisdom, Angkola – Batak Tribe

DISCUSSION

Moderation (based on local wisdom) in religion is simplicity and certainty because the local people have already owned and understood the benefits of having and practicing the values of local wisdom in the social life relations. When one practices the local wisdom, no one will ask “what is your religion?”, “how can we help?” in achieving individual goals and being in mutualism symbiosis. All creations of God Almighty have the same rights and obligations in their social reality. Studies on the prevalence of violence in the name of religion is caused by tensions and a strong sense of mutual suspicion between the Christian-Islamic communities. Furthermore, it seems there is a lack understanding from the communities about the meaning of religion itself to the human race.

Religious differences do not break the sense of unity and brotherhood in South Tapanuli, especially in Tanah Angkola. The narrative content of religious moderation actually intends to conserve plurality and not to put social capital aside. Moderation as a social capital is a value owned by individuals and groups that can make them understand and respect each other. Awareness of local wisdom as social capital continues to be built by promoting moderation. “*Budaya Sintuwu Maroso*” or “Sintuwu Maroso Culture” in Muhammad Nur’s article is a study which argues that local culture participates in building the dynamics of religious moderation in Poso. The understanding about the *Piamo* (former people) is part of their ancestral cultural values that have been passed down among generations. For example, this culture contains noble values that are useful in the principles of community life in the *Mesale* (mutual cooperation) tradition. The principles of *mosintuwu* is the feeling of sharing other people’s distress by giving something in the form of money and groceries. The basic goal is togetherness—one of the building social relations. *Sintuwu Maroso* is a local culture or local wisdom of the Poso people, a culture which is very diverse, and it is part of the religious moderation. This local wisdom contains noble

values that are very useful in the social life of the community—in building and maintaining a harmonious quality of life for its citizens and cultural values in it.

Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, the former Minister of Religion of Indonesia, said that religious moderation is an attitude of holding back acts of violence, or staying away from extremes in religious practices. Such an attitude is very important to proclaim by different religions as a common point of view in carrying out their respective religions. pulling back religious practices to conform to their essence, and for religion to truly function as a guardian. There are several “adhesives medium” for religious moderation in South Tapanuli, especially in Bumi Angkola, among them.

FAMILY KINSHIP RELATIONS

The customs of the Southern Tapanuli people, especially the Angkola land, are thick with customs known as *Dalihan Na Tolu*—‘the three burners’. *Dalihan Na Tolu* has a functional position as a social construction consisting of three things which are the foundation of the society:

1. *Hormat Namarmora* (respect to the wife’s family);
2. *Elek Marboru* (attitude of persuading/protecting women); and
3. *Manat Mardongan Tubu* (the attitude of being careful to friends of the same clan).

This form of local wisdom is what makes Southern Tapanuli becomes one of the harmonious regions in carrying out their respective religious principles. The people are bound by the customs which are continuously guarded and preserved. This local wisdom of the local community is very unique and interesting in the Southern Tapanuli, especially the land of Angkola. One example of the customs is *marpege-pege*, *martahi*, and *marsialapari* traditions. This is proven to be able to establish harmony among the people in the southern part of Tapanuli in particular, because there is mutual help and mutual need in the society.

The houses of the people are located in the same area, blending together (without being situated based on the owners’ religious groups). This means that the community is mixed and not compartmentalized based on religion—proving that there is

high awareness of God's fellow creatures as strength in embracing differences.

Fellow residents respect and support each other because of family relations and local customs. In carrying out their daily lives, people carry out good social interactions between individuals with each other—this is carried out modestly without feeling awkward and without revealing the differences between them. Sutrisna states that a pluralistic society will behave socially with social guidelines that are upheld and applied in everyday interactions under the auspices of local wisdom. This is used as a series of morals, norms, social values, and rules originating from social aspects, as culture of society, and used as a reference in interacting between humans in a pluralistic society.

Sutrisna emphasizes that local wisdom has a significant contribution in uniting hearts, minds, and community movements that result in progress in areas of life whose benefits can be felt by all mankind. Flexibility in attitude and expression of religious teachings in an inclusive manner is an effort to respond to the balance caused by the influence of globalization. By always adhering to “traditionalism” and local wisdom, the Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School is able to sail amidst the challenges of modernity without having to be uprooted from its own cultural roots.

Thus, local wisdom is very strategic in the realization of moderation. Novianus Isang and Silpanus Dalmasius emphasize that the implementation of local wisdom can be used as a reference for developing the practice of religious moderation. Dissemination of local wisdom-based religious moderation is also relevant and has been carried out in teaching and learning practices in formal schools. Thematic learning about local wisdom and religious moderation has developed from a conventional approach to a functional integrative approach.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF GOD'S CREATION

In the context of Southern Tapanuli, the principle of being aware that everything is God's creation is manifested in the form of strong customs for the local community. The three customs called “*Marpege-pege*, *Marsialapari*, and *Martahi*” all call for helping one another, feeling joy and sorrow, as well as the term *Dalihan Na Tolu*.

LOCAL WISDOM OF THE ANGKOLA BATAK TRIBE

Religious moderation in the Southern Tapanuli can be seen from various elements of community activity, namely: a. religious moderation in the attitudes and behavior of religious leaders who maintain good historical and family relations, b. the formation of community unions, c. the language of communication, cultural arts activities, and d. awareness as God's creation in community cohesion.

One form of religious moderation in the form of local wisdom that exists in the Southern Tapanuli is the existence of the *Marpege-pege* culture which is carried out when there is a celebration of marriage. *Marpege-pege* is carried out when there is a boy who want to propose his idol to be married and become his wife. *Marpege-pege* is a tradition of collecting money and can also be interpreted as helping the family of the prospective groom. The assistance can be in the form of material and immaterial support. This is part of the customs in Southern Tapanuli. *Marpege-pege* is not only intended for family members, but also for neighbors who are either Muslim or Christian.

Marsialapari is also a form of religious moderation in the form of local wisdom in Southern Tapanuli. *Marsialapari* comes from the words “*alap*” and “*ari*.” “*Alap*” means “take” while “*ari*” means “day” plus the prefix “*marsi*” which makes the word becomes a verb. “*Marsi*” means “mutual,” and “you are welcome.” In the Indonesian language, it means taking each other's day. So, the simple meaning of *marsialapari* is mutual cooperation. *Marsialapari* is also interpreted as an activity of helping and mutual cooperation. People voluntarily and gladly help each other—they help their relatives or neighbors who need help, which was usually done in the fields or in the garden. In particular, this tradition is practiced by both the Muslim and Christian communities in Southern Tapanuli.

In addition, moderation in religion can also be observed from the existence of a mosque building built close to the church. This is so unique and interesting that Erman S. Saragih argues that local wisdom is a vehicle for bonding and unifying differences in religious understanding in Southern Tapanuli. The intensity of family relations and communication is an antidote to suspicion. Mutual openness and understanding of differences are the philosophical foundations of the traditional Southern Tapanuli communities. If suspicion is low, violence in the name of religion has a low chance to exist.

The Southern part of Tapanuli consists of the Angkola Batak tribe and it has a unique tradition. Why does local wisdom-based religious moderation need to be constructed and used as an applied model in cases of violence against followers of religions? The argumentative offer of this paper is that local wisdom is a strategic medium for creating a moderate and harmonious society in the reality of differences in religious beliefs. Primordial society is actually a society that blends in, emphasizes customs, and maintains the virtues that have been instilled since the time of their ancestors.

These values promote a sense of mutual need for one another, mutual acceptance, mutual respect, and full sensitivity that they are both God's creatures. This idea is relevant as is the dimension of Pancasila values, namely modeling the mindset and attitude of respecting and exalting various distinctive aspects of religious diversity.

The same clan can be an effective mediation tool for every problem in society, including the issue of diversity. Local wisdom embodied in active religious moderation practices in various regions seems to be running well. It reveals that traditions and beliefs are interrelated and they are an effort to realize harmonious life values. The essence of the practice of moderation that is still found in society is created naturally, carried out without feelings of awkwardness, which is the essence of the practice of religious harmony. In communities of different beliefs, balanced religious attitudes are still found. Thus local wisdom is a unique tool in strengthening the values of religious moderation. Sometimes, normative challenges arise from the diction of religious moderation itself, the public in general misperceives the meaning of religious moderation, accusing it of being an agenda to liberate religion.

The spirit of moderation in religion, which is based on local wisdom is a necessity. A moderate attitude that respects equality and harmony is an indicator of the realization of a life full of openness, mutual interaction and a sense of mutual need in the sphere of diversity. Religious and cultural teachings are collaborate and become the main asset in building a moderate attitude among fellow believers, members of the community, and between religious adherents.

CONCLUSION

The asset of religious moderation in the land of Angkola, with local wisdom such as *Dalihan Na Tolu* or 'the three burners', have a very deep philosophy where these three items are interrelated with one another. *Dalihan Na Tolu* becomes a framework that includes blood relations and marital relations that tie groups together.

There are at least three activities that can become the bond for harmony among communities and interreligious communities, namely *marpege-pege*, *marsialaphari*, and *martahi*. The third activity is often carried out by the people in Southern Tapanuli up to the present time. These three activities are considered sufficient in running the interreligious harmony activities in Southern Tapanuli.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abror, Mhd. "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Bingkai Toleransi." *Pemikiran Islam* 1, no. Vol 1 No 2 (2020): Aspek Pemikiran Islam (2020): 137-48.

Akhmadi, Agus. "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Keragaman Indonesia Religious Moderation in Indonesia ' S Diversity." *Jurnal Diklat Keagamaan* 13, no. 2 (2019): 45-55.

Boer, Christa, and Hester E.M. Daelmans. "Team up with the Kearifan lokal in Medical Teaching." *British Journal of Anaesthesia* 124, no. 3 (2020): e52-54. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bja.2019.12.031>

Lubis, Adlan Fauzi Lubis. "Pembentukan Karakter Melalui Kearifan lokal (Studi Kasus Pada Madrasah Aliyah Pembangunan UIN Jakarta)." *Misykat Al-Anwar Jurnal Kajian Islam Dan Masyarakat* 30, no. 1 (2019): 1-21.

Mardiana, Dina & M. Taufiqi Rachman. "Aktualisasi Moderasi Keberagamaan Di Lembaga Pendidikan Berciri Khas Islam." *Jurnal Visi Ilmu Pendidikan* 13, no. 1

Mustaghfiroh, Hikmatul. "Kearifan lokal Dalam Pembelajaran PAI." *Edukasia : Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 1 (2014): 147-62. <https://doi.org/10.21043/edukasia.v9i1.769>.

Sabriadi, HR. “Manifestasi Kearifan lokal Dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam.” Ekspose: Jurnal Penelitian Hukum Dan Pendidikan 19, no. 1 (2020): 947–54. <https://doi.org/10.30863/ekspose.v1i1.769>.

Suryana, Yahya & Priatna, Tedi. Metode Penelitian Pendidikan. Bandung: Azkia Pustaka Utama, 2007.

Yulianto, Ridwan. “Implementasi Budaya Madrasah Dalam Membangun Sikap Moderasi Beragama.” Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran 1, no. 1 (2020): 111.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Agustina Damanik is a lecturer in Fakultas Syariah dan Ilmu Hukum UIN Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padang Sidempuan. agustinadamanik@uinsyahada.ac.id



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