

# The Active Role of Churches in Evangelism-related Missionaries in Indonesia

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**Abstract**— Evangelism in Indonesia is inseparable from the active role of missionaries, especially those sent by the church to various regions. However, the results achieved after a prolonged period were insignificant. Therefore, another approach is needed to streamline the role of the church in carrying out evangelism to various regions of the country. For this reason, the church needs to try a comprehensive approach involving the social, educational, and medical areas of peoples' lives. The principle is a total ministry of the gospel to reach all human aspects of the body, soul, and spirit. This comprehensive approach directs evangelistic activities in the regions to be more contextual according to the needs of the people served, hence it is expected to be more effective. **Research Contribution:** The research contributes to the mission strategy for Indonesian churches to send their missionaries to various regions by contributing new ideas for the effective outreach of souls through a comprehensive approach.

**Keywords**—Role of the Church; Evangelism; Missionary; Whole Approach; Indonesian context

## I. INTRODUCTION

According to history, the gospel entered Indonesia centuries ago through the arrival of European explorers and traders. Their arrival in several regions was not only for trading purposes rather it was also for power and evangelism. Although the arrival of these Europeans was limited to certain regions such as Ambon, Ternate, and Halmahera (Th.1546-1547), Christianity continued to grow to other communities that continue to exist traditionally today [1].

Furthermore, the growth of Christianity in Indonesia was continued by the presence of separate mission agencies, asides

from trade institutions, which tried to reach other regions. With this effort, new Christian community centers emerged in North Sulawesi, Sangir Talaud, the Tapanuli region, and various parts of the Nusa Tenggara archipelago. The presence of these evangelical missionaries was initiated in the Missionary and Zending organization [2]. Furthermore, the missionaries successfully established local churches in some of the regions visited and disciplined the indigenous people in accordance with their respective regional characteristics [2].

With the inception of the twentieth century, the pattern of evangelism to the regions started shifting and was mostly carried out to remote regions in accordance with the socio-political situation in Indonesia. Mission organizations focused more on remote regions that are yet to experience the gospel, such as the interior of Kalimantan and Papua. Presently, there are several news on their presence in these regions with various activities to cover education aspects and improve the population's welfare [3].

Missionaries are expected to work quietly irrespective of the unfavorable socio-political situation due to their prolonged presence in the country. [4] However, the reverse is the case, as its tremendous effort to achieve effective results in evangelism. Therefore, churches situated in this country need to collaborate to find significant breakthroughs [4].

Several churches and Christian organizations show great concern in carrying out evangelism to various regions by providing considerable material and immaterial resources. However, it needs to be acknowledged that the abundance of funds and the presence of specially educated missionaries did not automatically have a significant effect. Instead of reaping

the results of evangelism, negative things have happened, such as social conflicts, societal rejection, and life-threatening persecution [5]. For instance, on Friday, 27/11, the Salvation Army Church Service Post and a resident's house in Lewonu, Lembantongoa, Palolo Sub-district, Sigi Regency were burnt, along with other violence that claimed lives [6].

With the phenomena and facts that occur in evangelism in various regions, it is assumed that the act of sending missionaries has not been effective. Therefore, this research aims to provide answers on the strategies needed by the church to carry out evangelism more effectively. Furthermore, study related to this topic is still minimal. Generally, research that has been published is related to the method of evangelism that needs to be utilized [7], the contextual approach to a particular ethnic group [3], as well as the church's role in education [8], and ministry [9]. This research aims to make the missionaries in Indonesia truly effective with full support from all churches.

## II. METHOD

This is qualitative research with data obtained by referring to related books, journals, and other publications [10], which discusses the role of the church in evangelism related to missionaries to the regions. The authors also examined the church's role capable of having a significant impact on evangelism and the methods that can be carried out by missionaries in the regions effectively. All data were collected from various sources of historical literature related to the church's role and the mission carried out in various regions, which led to a final conclusion.

## III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### A. *The Call of Mission for the church and every Christian*

The mission is a calling for the church and every Christian. According to Stott, a complete Christian is a person that grows in three dimensions of responsibility, namely faith, life, and mission [11]. This means that Christians cannot escape from their evangelism responsibilities. According to Rick Warren, God wants believers to have a ministry in the Body of Christ and by converting unbelievers. To be a Christian means to be sent into the world as a representative of Jesus Christ (Jo. 20:21) [12]. In this regard, Stott stated the dangers of hypocrisy when the church neglects the act of conducting missionary-related activities, therefore, it does not need to be trapped in worship and fellowship activities alone [11].

Furthermore, Warren also stated that the mission carried out by Jesus while on earth is related to believers as the Body of Christ. This is because what He did with His physical body needs to be continued by believers. The mission is to lead people to God (2Cor 5:18) [12]. Jesus calls believers to come and work for Him [13].

### B. *The Role of the Church in Indonesia in Evangelism*

The church in Indonesia needs to be involved in carrying out evangelism. The global increase in Christians is generally

due to the rise in the number of evangelisms. According to data from the Numbers of Research Center, an increase in churches due to the efforts of leaders is 27.3 percent [14]. This certainly does not significantly indicate the success of evangelism because it is necessary to consider the possible correlation between Indonesia's growing population and a growing number of Christians [15]. Conversely, there are still tribes or cities in Indonesia that have not heard the gospel [16].

The evangelical role of churches in Indonesia is diverse and uneven, with some actively involved in preaching the gospel while taking simple roles, such as missionary formation, provision of support resources, or collaborative social activities. However, it is undeniable that the church's role in Indonesia is still relatively minimal and ineffective [17].

### C. *Evangelism and Missionaries to Regions in the Indonesian Context*

According to research carried out by Pandie and Ardel, two assumptions affect the effectiveness of evangelism in the regions. Firstly, despite the number of Christians in several regions, the majority failed to preach the gospel. Secondly, irrespective of the large population of Christians in a region, they failed to preach the gospel. Therefore, even regions with large Christian populations are acting passively in preaching the gospel [16]. This is an irony and points to the fact that evangelism is not working adequately.

For this reason, it is very important to reconstruct the mission of churches hence the activity of sending missionaries to various regions does not become redundant or a 'lips-service' program. It needs to be admitted that there is still a dichotomy in the understanding of mission among the church, namely Evangelism or Social Action [18]. Meanwhile, according to Wilbert R. Shenk, Christian missions in the context of formal studies need various reviews and analyses tailored to the conditions of social, political, economic, and religious trends. Shenk stated that to carry out a mission properly it is necessary to consider four aspects, namely normative, historical, present, and future [19].

In this context, the church community in general often has different views regarding the dichotomy of Evangelism and Social Action. According to Stott, this dichotomy is unbiblical because the church is called to witness and serve [11]. Another important thing to be considered when sending missionaries to these regions is understanding their history and background. Furthermore, things that need attention in Indonesian society regarding evangelism are religious and cultural diversity and a striking poverty situation [20].

In plurality, the main problem that often arises is the relationship colored by competition and enmity between religions, especially Christians and Muslims with historical roots [21]. Meanwhile, the striking poverty situation in Indonesian society is entangled with complex and interrelated problems. As a socio-economic-political context, an objective, critical, and comprehensive analysis of the situation is needed for churches to position themselves and enter the Indonesian

context [22]. Therefore, churches need to build a contextual understanding of the mission to ensure the sending of missionaries to various regions is more effective [23].

Iman Santoso reported that the Christian mission in Indonesia has its place in the vocation of the church among the PGI (Indonesian Church Association) and PII (Indonesian Evangelical Association). This is analyzed in the first five PGI unity documents, which stated that the church is everywhere and throughout the ages called to preach the gospel to all beings (Mrk. 16:15) [24]. Likewise, the objectives of the PII organization stated that it aims to build fellowship as the embodiment of organisms that live as the holy and universal body of Christ and promote evangelistic efforts carried out by churches, ecclesiastical institutions, and evangelical mission agencies [24].

Darmanto also highlighted the existence of two poles of understanding, namely those that saw the gospel as a means for mere soul salvation and those that understood it in the form of social witness. Darmanto concluded the need for a balance between the two is related to a holistic understanding of evangelism [25].

Furthermore, Richard Suwu stated that ecumenical and evangelical approaches characterize the modern mission movement. Theologically, the ecumenical focus more on the social dimension, or the anthropocentrism of the Bible, which stated that safety has an overall social and humanitarian impact. Meanwhile, the evangelical approach emphasizes the individual spiritual dimension of the gospel by stating that repentance and personal piety are the keys to human salvation [26, pp. 203–204].

According to Ken Gnanakan, there are two important elements that are often debated in modern mission activities, namely evangelism and social action [27]. Meanwhile, according to Stott, the social responsibility of believers is related to aspects of the mission and repentance. Stott stated that in Jesus' ministry while on earth, preaching the gospel, preaching, and loving the ministry were sequential. God's works revealed His words and described His work [11]. Therefore, the dichotomy of Evangelism and Social Action in Mission needs to be discarded with a comprehensive method.

#### *D. Comprehensive Approach – An Approach to a More Effective Role of the Church related to Missionaries*

There are several methods required for mission-related activities to run effectively, one of which is evangelism. An example of this is the Comprehensive Approach, which provides direction for mission activities to focus on spiritual and all aspects of life. This evangelism method is the best approach to apply to conditions in Indonesia [7].

The Comprehensive Approach is an evangelism method that involves all human aspects by referring to the principle that the Bible is the body, soul, and spirit of a Christian. As written in Luke 4: 18-19, Jesus served the spiritual aspect, healed people's ailments, and fed the hungry. This is what the

Bible means to be joyful news for humans, including their social conditions, therefore, a comprehensive approach to mission that covers all areas of human life is needed [28]. The presence of the church in Indonesia is responsible for responding to all forms of dehumanization that are contrary to the values that affirm life [29].

The implementation of the Gospel preaching also has other sub-objectives, namely saving individuals' souls, social development, and restoring the structure of society. The purpose of evangelism in terms of saving the individual's soul focuses on "leading people to Jesus". It emphasizes the direct relationship between God and each person, also known as a personal conversion. Furthermore, the purpose of evangelism in social development is known as the Social Gospel movement, which is also a movement that promotes evangelists to benefit the surrounding community. Evangelism needs to be carried out theologically and practically through the ministry, while the kingdom of God is manifested through social activity and progress. The gospel preached is inseparable from its application and concrete actions in various fields, including personal life, family, community, nation, religion, trade, economic welfare, etc. [17].

Meanwhile, the purpose of evangelism in restoring the structure of society has been widely expressed in the Ecumenical movement. The task of the believer and the church is to express deep concern over all kinds of injustice in social fields such as poverty and unrighteousness related to politics, freedom of human rights, etc. John Stott stated that the church has a "dual identity." On the one hand, it comprises of holy people called from the world to God, while on the other, it is "worldly" with people sent back into the world to witness and serve God [30]. This means that the church is insufficient in providing internal or centripetal ministries, including the program of evangelism. It is not uncommon for many churches to carry out evangelistic programs by sending missionaries solely for their interests, such as opening new branches and increasing congregations, for the sake of prestige by sending many delegates to various regions without any significant results [31].

According to Paul Enns, the church serves two purposes, namely, to serve the body of Christ and spread the gospel to the world. [32] It means that the church comes together as a body of believers to serve one another and preach the gospel to unbelievers. It is an adult (Eph. 4:13), which is manifested in various activities in the fields of Teaching, Fellowship, and Worship. The NT church does not attempt to evangelize in a closed room rather the congregation goes out into the world according to the commandments to preach the Gospel (Matt. 28: 18-20). This means that the church needs to move towards centrifugal and external evangelism. The interests of the people served are the safety and well-being of the local community [33].

Stott stated that the church as the Body of Christ is responsible for preaching the gospel in line with various social responsibilities. This goes both ways for every believer where

those called to work in the field of social services still have an obligation to testify. When the main call is to work in the field of evangelism, it still has a social responsibility. Therefore, Stott stated that Christians are members of visible (local) and invisible (universal) churches irrespective of their localities [30]. Therefore, based on the above matters, the role of the church in terms of evangelism needs to reach out to the spiritual, mental, and social aspects of the people being served, which means an Evangelism method with a Comprehensive Approach.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The effectiveness of the church's role in terms of evangelism in Indonesia is related to missionaries and summarized as follows: Firstly, the church needs to reconstruct the evangelistic paradigm that is currently adopted, from spiritual to contextual, inward (centripetal) to outward (centrifugal), and from internal needs to external interests. Secondly, one of the paradigm reconstructions offered is the evangelism paradigm that adopts a comprehensive approach. Thirdly, the role of the church in evangelism in Indonesia related to missionaries needs to be effective when implementing programs using a comprehensive approach. These programs include preparing missionaries with an understanding of sociology and other knowledge, which is useful in communicating and fulfilling the needs of local communities. Fourthly, it is necessary to form a working team comprising of knowledgeable and skilled people to accompany the missionaries to these regions, hence they are able to support the outreach of souls as a whole. Fifthly, the church provides access to sufficient resources, both material and immaterial hence the missionaries and their work teams have the ability to serve and preach the gospel effectively. Sixthly, as an institution, the church needs to help facilitate outreach programs to local government and security authorities hence missionaries to these regions get legality and proper security protection.

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