Reduction of Horizontal Conflicts between Religions in Christian Ethical Review

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Abstract—**Religion can trigger various problems and conflicts that can divide the nation's society who live in harmony for a long time. Through a descriptive qualitative method with a literature study approach, this research concluded that to reduce horizontal conflicts between religious communities, the role of the Christians from the Christian ethical review is to respect pluralism in a multicultural setting. Furthermore, in actualizing harmony, people should change to the wrong paradigm of nationalism, where nationalism is often misunderstood and considered to oppose religious values. In Christian ethical studies and reviews, the believers are to live in harmony. So that believers can be a blessing amid a multicultural dimension where it becomes a tool to reduce horizontal conflicts that often occur. Research Contribution: This research contributes to the social sciences concerning the resolution of horizontal conflicts of religions in the Christian concept for Christians to appreciate plurality and pluralism. Practically, it encourages Christian to become Christ's witness, with an attitude of tolerance to the differences in Indonesia that will also impact national unity.**

Keywords—conflict; religion; ethical review; Christian

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian, in its plurality, must endure the experience of horizontal conflicts related to beliefs or religions. Religious issues are indicators of disintegration in social relations that can destroy the unity of the nation. Today, social media users who freely express their hatred of other religions trigger the most religious conflicts in Indonesia. By social media, anyone is free to express opinions and ideas. However, excessive freedom without any control often creates the potential for conflict, which eventually leads to a separation [1]. Even though people intend to use social media as a discussion forum, it often develops political and religious debates [2]. The self-centered arguments on beliefs trigger conflicts that have negative impacts, including disruption in harmonious social relations, destroying common goals, causing hatred and confusion, reducing trust, and evoking emotions [3]. People

can easily abuse religion as a tool of disintegration [4]. Social media has influenced social life in society. Changes in social relations and institutions affect the social system, including values, attitudes, and behavior patterns among groups in society [1].

Religion indeed has two effects on humans: positive and negative. Positively, religion can make people live in brotherhood, give strength to those who suffer, give a sense of security and belonging among followers of the same faith [5]. While negatively, religion can serve as a tool to provoke conflicts by the irresponsible people [6]. Conflicts occur due to differences in concepts or practices carried out by religious adherents who deviate from the provisions set by religious dogma, where the disputes usually begin [7]. As it happened in Ambon (Maluku) is a strong example of the conflict between religions, especially Muslims and Christians [8]. Likewise, the inter-religious conflict in the Tanjung Balai North Sumatra in 2016 represents the de-escalation of religious tolerance. Acts of violence and agitation also colored the fights, still becoming a symbol of disappointment and hatred [9]. Discrimination against minority groups is also still common, such as the bloody tragedy of the Shia in Sampang Madura a few years ago and the persecution of Ahmadiyya congregation in various cities of West Java. Those cases reflect that the government and society have not been able to accept differences [10]. Tensions between religious communities are closely related to factors outside the scope of religion itself [7].

In Indonesia, conflicts between religious communities still often occur, primarily related to authorizations for building sanctuaries [11]. The emergence of various religious conflict phenomena in Indonesia indicates that the citizens do not fully understand the internal conditions of its nation with a multicultural background [12]. Several conflicts between religious communities have not a common ground until now, namely conflicts between religious communities in Moro Philippines (Islam and Christianity), the massacre of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, sectarian clashes in the city of Boda, the

Central African Republic involving Muslims and Christians, conflict in Poso between Muslims and Christians, and the Shia conflict in East Java. Besides, ISIS whose desire is to establish an Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Many religious and social organizations, as well as national leaders, condemn ISIS [7]. From those cases, hatred is built as a narrative to put personal spiritual and religious leaders in a difficult situation through comments on social media platforms. It results in physical violent conflicts and blasphemy (hate speech) to the different religious groups in digital media. On social media, for example, many posts are blasphemous [13]. Therefore, proportional attitude and mutual respect for pluralism and social piety in the plurality of nations has now faded [10].

Retnowati has researched the topic of reducing horizontal conflicts between religious communities in Christian ethics entitled Religion, Conflict, and Social Integration of Reflection of Religious Life in Indonesia: Learning from the Situbondo Community to Build Post-Conflict Integration [14]. The study concluded that there is a religious conflict in society that causes the disintegration of society. Conflict resolution is possible if there is a collective will and effort, religious communities, especially those involved in the conflict, to bring about peace. Graham K Brown and Arnim Langer conducted similar research entitled Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: A Critical Review and Research Agenda [15], which concluded that state politics played a role in horizontal conflicts as the prime political actor to mediate or exacerbate conflict horizontally. Based on the two studies, there are still things that have not been researched, namely reducing conflicts in Christian ethical reviews. Therefore, this article will study and discuss this topic.

II. METHOD

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative [16], with a literature study because it seeks information relevant to the problem to be studied and facilitates the formulation of the exact theory with the reality of the phenomena concerning the approach related to reducing horizontal disputes. The authors also investigated several parallel biblical texts on Christian ethical review that support this research to obtain descriptive information about their meaning in the perspective of the Christian faith. The authors then described the situation in the era of disruption related to the condition of Indonesia's heterogeneous society in using social media as the goal of hatred narrated in comments on social media platforms. The authors finally described the importance of Christians in building pluralism and multiculturalism attitudes based on God's Word since the believers are responsible for creating harmony and carrying out God's mandate as light and salt in a pluralistic society.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Role of Religion in the Plural Society

The role of religion in history has various impacts. On the one hand, religion has provided values and vision, a source of spirituality, ethical principles, and revolutionary impetus to fight injustice and oppression in society [17]. But on the other hand, the existence of religious people and religious institutions often hinders scientific progress and social development; and in some circumstances, it is also on the side of the rich and the strong against the poor and the weak; moreover, they contribute to the tension and conflict in society [9]. Even religion is the basis for horizontal disputes caused by a single definition of truth, domination, and hegemony over others so that it often has implications for a sense of injustice and inequality that brings sentiments of hatred in an increasingly widespread community [9].

The differences in dogmatic, or commands in prohibitions, and religious attitudes of various religions, make followers of existing religions argue with each other to prove which one is true and present [18]. It can also be caused by over religious fanaticism and contains a spirit of hatred in the name of one religion to oppose another religion. The existence of religious diversity in all aspects of life is a reality that is impossible to avoid. However, in this diversity, there is often a destructive potential. In this era, the plurality of society tends to be a burden, as evidenced by the emergence of various problems whose sources smell of pluralism riddled with conflicts and interests, especially in the field of religion [13]. In the dogmatic of religious doctrine, a response to the call to salvation go together with obedience to encourage others to come to salvation. This activity is an effort to socialize (invite, persuade) religious teachings [7]. The attitude of radicalism and intolerance due to religious exclusivism is unhealthy in the life of a multicultural society [19]. The arrogance that one religion is right and the other is wrong will lead to inevitable clashes between individuals. This phenomenon can damage religious harmony and have the potential to give birth to more religious conflicts [7].

The different conceptions of God and life regulations between one religion and others often trigger physical and non-physical conflicts within religious communities [4]. In this era of disruption, people discuss those differences as materials for endless debates using communication media and digital information, which even leads to insulting others' beliefs and religious leaders. It is undeniable that the development of information technology brings a change in society. The birth of social media makes people's behavior patterns experience a shift in both cultures, ethics, and existing norms [1]. To keep harmony amid the digital conflicts in a world of disruption is the task for all levels of society, including Christians. Therefore, a Christian should prioritize biblical concepts and values in resolving disputes or conflicts in this era of disruption. Here, Christian ethical studies play a vital role in analyzing the issues and proposing a biblical-based way to reduce numerous religious horizontal conflicts.

B. *Appreciating Pluralism and Multiculturalism*

Not all Indonesians fully understand what national multiculturalism means. In general, people fully understand that every human being is born different, both physically and non-physically. However, the collective reason of society is unable to accept the fact that every individual or group has a belief system, culture, religion, race, and ritual procedures [20]. The management of existing diversity with an approach of multicultural values causes the interaction and integration of the Indonesian people peacefully to foster an attitude of togetherness, tolerance, humanism, and democracy with the principles of togetherness, tolerance, humanism, and Pancasila democracy [21]. Pluralism should not be an understanding that considers all religions the same, but rather to respect religious differences. This arrogance that does not respect the differences between religions leads to destructive actions against adherents of other faiths. Therefore, pluralism should show society that every human being has the same rights, including choosing a religion [20]. In recognition of multiculturalism, there is an attitude and responsibility to maintain the value of tolerance for differences in society, including religious differences.

Another meaning of multiculturalism is the willingness to accept other groups equally as a unit, regardless of differences in culture, ethnicity, gender, language, or religion. Plurality merely represents the existence of pluralism (which is more than one), while multiculturalism emphasizes that with all their differences, they are equal [10]. Multiculturalism is also an understanding that takes care of minority groups, specifically to protect ethnic groups to maintain their identity. In simple terms, multiculturalism is nationalism for minorities. Multiculturalism has a contribution to the growing awareness of the importance of protecting minorities [10]. Therefore, the nation's community and Christians must rightly interpret the value of plurality in human life. The sociological reality of this diversity must also be upheld, respected, and continuously maintained [13]. Respect for human rights protected by law is the basis for the people of a nation to continue to respond and actualize diversity as part of the nation's unity so that everyone from various ethnic groups, genders, and races has the opportunity to develop themselves and respect each other's differences [10]. Indeed, mutual respect, tolerance, live together in diversity are the goals of the multiculturalism [22]. Religion can function to build harmony and as a basis for social practice [23].

1) *Changing the Wrong Paradigm of Nationalism*

Nationalism has long been interpreted as a spirit between ethnic groups, religions, races, and groups in Indonesia as a form of resistance to colonialism that creates harmonious integration until Indonesia's independence is achieved based on cooperation between such diversity. But nowadays, many people see nationalism as the national solidarity of minority groups who feel intimidated by the majority group [24]. This concept is wrong, and people need to straighten it out to the correct meaning of nationalism by eliminating the difference between the majority and the minority, especially in terms of

religion. Nationalism is in line with all religious roles and norms. Even it has one goal, namely, to maintain the sovereignty of the Indonesian republic. For this reason, all components of the Indonesian nation should be able to build a multi-ethnic and cultural society by upholding the attitude of nationalism [21].

Nationalism embodies mutual respect, respect, tolerance as well as cooperation between religious communities. In addition, every individual who lives in a multicultural society needs to maintain security, order, and harmonious coexistence [25], because the potential for religious intolerance is sometimes rooted in their respective teachings, which do not place a sense of humanity as part of the value of diversity. Excessive fanaticism towards a religion leads to intolerance towards others, which results in harassment and coercion of belief. From there, unavoidable horizontal conflicts arise, even accompanied by violent acts, and become terrors in society. This kind of intolerance often leads to radicalism [13].

Respecting other people and seeing the uniqueness of equal but different identities as free citizens will develop nationalism [24]. The practice of freedom to embrace and practice religion in Indonesia should not prohibit the freedom of others to embrace and practice a different religion. For this reason, religious adherents in Indonesia must integrate faith and nationalism as a form of love for the country [26], in maintaining harmony to reduce religious conflicts. In addition, the Indonesian people must defend the country by instilling a sense of love for the homeland and playing an active role in the nation's harmony and progress [26]. Defending the nation from intolerance and radicalism is also a tangible manifestation of the nationalism and patriotism of every citizen [27]. This paradigm must continue to be part of the actualization and existence of Indonesian people as part of a multicultural society that socializes with mutual respect. Likewise, Christians living in Indonesia are responsible for upholding the attitude of nationalism following God's Word [28].

C. *Living in Harmony from Christian Ethical Review*

Tolerance between religious communities means mutual understanding, respect, and openness in the bonds of brotherhood as children of the nation despite different religions. Tolerance and harmony are something that is ideals and coveted by society [29]. Similarly, religion teaches the values of tolerance [30]. Human, as social creature is involved in social relationships or interactions with each other. Human relationships in society are in a normative order that is mutually agreed upon by community members called values or norms. Norms guarantee the realization of harmony in the form of peace [31]. Christians are responsible for creating harmony and accomplishing the mission to become peacemakers in a pluralist and multicultural society [32].

The primary teaching of Jesus is love for God and others. When believers apply love for others as love for oneself, harmony will be created in the social life [33]. Mark 12:33 carries a message of mercy in sincerity and willingness. Christian identity can be seen from the effort to present an

impactful life, especially the creation of a shared life that increasingly touches the depths of spirituality that restores, revives, and saves [34]. God's Word demands that we love our fellow human beings in the love of Christ that the Bible teaches. Therefore, the basis of love for neighbor does not lie in the nation and ethnicity, not the groups' interests, and not in the qualities that follow the world's norms. Love for others includes those of different religions because God, Himself affirms that He is one God and is Lord of all who is rich to all who call on Him (Rm. 10:12) [34]. Christians need to wear love as a binder of national unity and unity (Col. 3:14) [19]. However, Christians need to affirm who Jesus is, namely the only Lord and Savior, the genuine peace giver. The testimony of Christians in a life that represents Christ in a pluralistic society will create real strong harmony.

Christians are obliged to glorify God's name by being doers of the Word in instilling harmony in society. Christianity views the differences in Indonesia's plural society as a gift from God and a nation's wealth that we guard and are grateful for it. Amid the diversity of religions and belief systems in Indonesia, Christians maintain the spirit of harmony and plurality. Christians must respect the differences in Indonesia to realize God's peace on earth. If togetherness and unity are not a priority, the conflicts will occur sooner or later [19]. Therefore, anything related to hatred and acts of intolerance has no place in Christian witness based on the teachings of the Bible. Tolerance should be the main priority and need in building a good society.

D. Being a Blessing Amid Multicultural Dimension

Claims of truth from a convert by carrying messages of harassment against other religions and other people of different faiths have become commonplace in Indonesia today. Some people manipulate religion, insulting God's name in selfishness and collective pride. Those who profess as religious people should show the attitudes of worship, submission, and humility to the transcendent [7]. Religious people should respect and uphold diversity in Indonesia as a unifying tool for the nation. Unfortunately, in reality, this diversity has given rise to many horizontal conflicts that can bias the principle of Bhineka Tunggal Ika (Diversity in Unity) as the nation's motto [9].

Exemplary attitudes of religious leaders, correct knowledge of how to interact with other religious people, and a multicultural approach are necessary to eliminate or reduce social conflicts that often arise so far, especially inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts in Indonesia [35]. Christian religious leaders also need to instill a high awareness of the people as early as possible about living in harmony with adherents of other religions in a multicultural society [36]. Despite suffering and limitations in the worship of their Lord, Christians must not hate those who persecute them. On the other hand, as the Bible says, Christians need to be channels of God's blessing and love for those whose hearts are filled with hatred and arrogance because they think their religion is the truest.

IV. CONCLUSION

Conflicts related to religious issues cause divisions in society and cause injury and suffering to humanity. From a Christian ethical perspective, Christians should respect pluralism and multiculturalism to reduce horizontal conflicts between religious communities in Indonesia. Christians must love others as themselves by accepting, valuing, and respecting others regardless of religion or belief. By loving, Christians show a great witness as followers of Christ amid this nation's plurality. Furthermore, the right paradigm of nationalism is needed to create harmony. Christians should have a high spirit of nationalism by loving this land with all the diversity it has. By living God's Word to become peacemakers and preachers of the good news, Christians become channels of blessing in the multicultural dimension and help reduce horizontal conflicts in Indonesia.

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