Christianity and Plurality in Indonesia

Theological and Ideological Synergy for Religious and National Moderation

Thomas Pentury
Director-General of Christian Guidance at the Ministry
of Religion Affairs Republic of Indonesia
Jakarta, Indonesia

Stevri Penti Novri Indra Lumintang
International Reformed Evangelical Seminary (IRES)
Jakarta, Indonesia
stevri.indralumintang@gmail.com

Abstract—**The purpose of this research was to determine the essence of the synergy between theology and the Pancasila ideology and strengthen religious moderation from a Christian perspective. It was qualitatively achieved based on the naturalism research paradigmthe content analysis method. Subsequently, the findings showed that fundamentalism and religious pluralism are two polarized, contradicting, and narrow religious extremes that cause divisions. Therefore, both aspects cannot synergize theology and ideology. From a Christian perspective, there are five foundations for this synergy, which requires their role in respecting religious plurality and upholding the Pancasila ideology, as the principle of living together. First, togetherness is strength and serves as a capital for unity and integrity as an absolute condition for Indonesia's development and progress. Research Contribution: This research helps Christians to develop Indonesia and world peace and a tool with a tremendous and strong potential to create unity and integrity among people. This approach is proposed to further develop religious moderation is created in synergy between Christian theology and Pancasila ideology.**

Keywords—*christianity, religious pluralism, moderation, synergy, theology and ideology*

I. INTRODUCTION

The world currently encompasses different religions of faith, which all began from the same source,[1] and this phenomenon is known as a religious plurality. Although these religions are different, existing or living together in one area is typical for countries with religious plurality contexts, such as Indonesia. Pinnock asserted, "for the first time in the world's history, the existence of one religion in splendid isolation and ignoring of others is impossible."[2] Meanwhile, Christianity is a religion that differs in faith from others and also possesses many groups or denominations with different doctrines. Therefore, peacefully living together and relating has been essential in the history of Christian interaction with other religions.

Unfortunately, like other religions, Christianity is often used as a "vehicle" for various interests, especially politics and economics, which are the most frequently and strongly exploited. Religion is like a "beautiful queen," constantly chased by rulers, politicians, businessmen, and merchants for their agendas because it is the most influential institution in accomplishing world peace. Also, it has the most power to cause world destruction.[3][4] as national colonialism, played by

groups viewed as superior, and countries considered more substantial than others tend to use religion as a "tool of interest." It was also manipulated by political and economic interests, which increased sharply at the beginning of this postmodern era, resulting in a decline of public trust in the leaders of religious institutions.[5][6]

All religions teach kindness, love for others and are not anti-human. A message of peace and love towards others, called the Golden Rule, is at the heart of the major world religions. However, religion is occasionally involved in conflicts, acts of violence, and even murder due to the actions of leaders and people that use it for political and economic interests. Besides the use for various interests by external parties, conflicts are caused by the superior attitude of one religion towards another. This attitude is shaped by theological exclusivism or religious doctrines, which widen the gap and cause horizontal conflicts between adherents of various faiths. Such exclusivist groups are also called fundamentalists, who place theology above ideology (Pancasila) and fight for "religion of the state".[7]

Conversely, pluralist groups tend to be secularists and fight for pluralism, not plurality, of their religion, emphasize the nation's ideology, and ignore theologies. Both opposing extremes above, namely the fundamentalism, exclusivism, and the secularism group, comprising inclusivism and pluralism, contradict theology and ideology and disturb the peace of Indonesia. Therefore, this research intends to strengthen religious moderation from a Christian perspective through the synergy between theology (religion) and Pancasila ideology (politics). It explains religious plurality and the two aspects of polarization, namely exclusivism and narrow inclusivism, to elucidate the necessity of this synergy.

II. METHOD

The research method used was content analysis, a technique systematically employed to explain and analyze written content, such as books, articles, or newspapers, to make valid conclusions from the text and the applied context.[8][9] An essential and in-depth understanding of related research based on critical thinking was explored to find the synergy between two areas, theology and ideology, in different contexts, namely religion, and politics, respectively [10]. Consequently, the content analysis method will strengthen the values of religious moderation from a Christian perspective through this synergy. The steps used in this research were, first, select texts that are relevant to the research purpose. Second, code the messages embedded in the text according to the synergy between religion (theology) and the Pancasila ideology (politics).[11][12] In addition, two types of categories were used to classify the unit of analysis. These are substance, concerned

with describing the message content and is the basis of synergy, and form, which explains the message expression and is the embodiment of synergy.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Religious Pluralism Facts: The Uniqueness and Strength of the Indonesian Nation

Indonesia is an Asian country that is diverse in religion, culture, ethnicity, and language. Regarding religious pluralism, this country recognizes six formal religions, namely Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.[13] which is the uniqueness and wealth that has been a daily experience of the nation. Although not free from problems, living and working together is possible, which makes religious pluralism in Indonesia unique [14]. Widjaja stated that pluralism is a condition that encompasses a society that tolerates diversity [15]. Living together in this context is an opportunity for the maturation of the people, who may not necessarily have psychic, social, and religious maturity as in Indonesia. Therefore, religious pluralism in this country is a research field for the development of social sciences that can enrich nations.[2]

Besides living together, the Indonesian people fought together in the spirit of unity and oneness against colonialism from several European nations who were more advanced in civilization and war technology to become independent. Therefore, togetherness is strong means that ensures religious differences do not hinder the common struggle. After the independence, people from different religions also worked together to build the nation up to this reform era. Hence, the unity of different religions is a great force for the nation to face external challenges from colonialism and be built from within. Although this uniqueness and strength have made Indonesia survive and advance, there are still individuals and groups that interfere due to extreme religious ideas.

B. Religious Gap Facts: Religious Exclusivism (Fundamentalism) and Religious Inclusivism (Pluralism)

Despite the fact that religion is expected to be a carrier of wisdom or solution to societal and national problems, it is one of the biggest de facto causes of various issues. Although adherents generally believe that religion is an important basis for democracy and humanization, it is, in fact, a threat [16]. Two forms of religion contradict each other and tend to cause problems for democracy, humanity, and religion and its societal and national contexts. These are fundamentalism and pluralism, formed by the understanding and attitude of exclusivism and inclusivism, respectively. Fundamentalism is the extreme left of religion, while pluralism is the extreme right, and neither is compatible with mainstream religious theology nor the Indonesian ideology [17].

Generally, religious fundamentalism is approved by groups because the meaning of the word "fundamental" is to defend the essential truth and restore their religion from deviations. However, it is a militant and conservative ideology that tends to be fanatical, narrow-minded, sectarian, and hinders progress [18]. This ideology rose from religious and political movements observed through the struggle of fundamentalists in Afghanistan, Mindanao, the Philippines, Syria, and several terrorist groups in Indonesia, fighting to establish religious states. Liberalism,

secularism, westernization, globalization, and Americanization are often voiced as excuses for religious states and fundamentalists to control political and economic resources for their interests.[19][20]

Adherents of religious fundamentalism consider those who stand in their way as enemies and idolize those that support them. They are very militant and tend to be closed, think themselves the most correct, are anarchist,[21] and commit terrorist acts.[22] Therefore, these small groups are dangerous and are threats due to their tendencies to separate and contradict the main religion. Besides being dangerous to national integrity because they refused to recognize Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, they threaten humanity due to radicalism, terrorism, and violence in the name of religion [23].

The opposite of fundamentalism is religious pluralism, and this must be distinguished from plurality, which Indonesia possesses. Religious pluralism is an understanding that recognizes the existence of one truth seen from different perspectives according to religions [24]. It is a position that rejects the uniqueness, finality, or decisive claims to God's revelation in Jesus Christ [25]. These groups believe that the truth of all religions comes from the same source and object of worship and should be the same, meaning the differences only exist in perspectives [26].

Unfortunately, these pluralist groups are destroying religions from within, as they wish to create a peaceful world without conflict but by abandoning the uniqueness of each religion. Hence, they developed several theories, such as John Hick's theory of the Copernicus revolution,[26] Clark Pinnock's theory of the metaphor of Christ's incarnation,[26] the Compassionate God by Choan Seng Song,[27] and many others, which generally reject the uniqueness or finality of Christ. In addition, they reconstructed these theories to ensure their acceptability by leaving all the traditional theological formulations previously held by the church. Instead, they offer their theological formulations that have lost their character or identity. Therefore, religious pluralism is very dangerous because it rejects the Bible, Christ's finality, the role of the church as God's agent, and the Gospel proclamation. They also deny the existence and essence of multiple religions (religious plurality) and are very contrary to the Pancasila ideology [28].

Fundamentalism and religious pluralism are two opposing views. Although fundamentalism is exclusive and tends to reject the Pancasila ideology, pluralism is inclusive and rejects spiritual theology, and both disturb the creation of national unity and integrity. The principal capital in realizing national ideals is unity and integrity, including in pluralistic religious communities. Widjaja et al said that the existence of a pluralistic order of life is expected to produce mutual respect [29]. Though fundamentalism and pluralism cannot be synergized, ideology and religious theology can be explained in the following discussion.

C. The Basis of Sinergism between Theology and Ideology from a Christian Perspetive

Christians have no reasons to oppose religious plurality and the principle of living together (ideology) in Indonesia. Instead, they have at least five (5) reasons for acknowledging this synergy.

First, the ideology and religious plurality are derived from the same source, which is the general revelation of God. This does not conflict with the special revelation, namely the Bible, because both are from God.[30] and there is no contradiction in Him. The existence of other pluralistic religions is a human response to God's general revelation (creation), while Christianity is the result of His special revelation. Therefore, living in harmony and mutual respect for fellow human beings of different religions is a form of synergism between the general (ideology) and special revelations (theology). Therefore, Fransiskus Irwan Widjaja et al wrote that Christianity needs to understand its calling in a pluralistic world [31].

Second, a Christian's citizenship is dual, namely Indonesian and God's kingdom [32]. Indonesian citizenship is contemporaneous and obliges every Christian to comply with civil regulations, while God's kingdom is spiritual, and the followers are obliged to live in truth and justice. Both do not contradict each other,[33] as Christians' obedience to state law is a part of the expression to God (theology), hence obeying the law of theology does not conflict with socio-political law.

Third, the obligation of Christians is synergistic between God and the government. Jesus said, 'Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."' (Matt. 22:21). There are no conflicting obligations of Christians to God (theology) and the government (ideology).[6]

Fourth, believers are commanded to love God and others (Matt. 22:37-39). The others include children of different religions, the nation, and the country where they exist. This love mandate is to synergize between God and others, i.e., between theology and ideology. The Pancasila ideology with its five precepts does not contradict Christian theology but rather corresponds with Biblical truth, namely divinity, humanity, unity, democracy, and social justice.

Fifth, the obedience of Christians to the nation (ideology) is part of the manifestation of their obedience to God (theology). This is one of the meanings of "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6:10). Christians are called to manifest the heavenly truth (theology) on earth, including in Indonesia, by living a righteous and just life, as written in the constitution and the Pancasila ideology. Christians' submission to the government (ideology) and God are synonymous in the context of His covenant,[34] because the government originates and is ordained by God (Rom. 13:1-2).

Therefore, these five reasons make Christians live and function synergistically through obedience to God (the Bible) and the state (ideology). They are only anti-insurgents, anti-colonialists in all forms, anti-division, and anti-theft (corruption) to the state. These five principles indicate that Christianity does not approve of religious fundamentalism and pluralism but supports moderation and peace. (Matt. 5:9).

D. The Embodiment of the Synergism between Ideology and Theology: Religious Moderation

Indonesia guarantees freedom of religion for every citizen, alongside their existence and role in Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. The state has synergized between ideology and the constitution with all religions. Through the First Precept, namely Belief in One Supreme God, the Indonesian people express their belief and devotion to God Almighty. In this regard, the moral values taught by religion (theology) belong to the interpretation and implementation of Pancasila (ideology). The last paragraph of the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution emphasizes the position of this religion by affirming the belief in the one and only God, alongside just and civilized humanity. It also emphasizes the belief in the unity of Indonesia and Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the agreement arising from deliberations amongst representatives and by realizing social justice for all people.[35] Hence, belief in God Almighty is inseparable from democracy and living justly and civilly. The 1945 Constitution Chapter XI, article 29, affirms that the state (1) is based on the One Godhead and (2) guarantees the independence of each resident to embrace their respective religions and worship according to their beliefs. These two foundations assert that Indonesia is not a theocratic state based on religion, nor a secular and capitalist-liberal state.[36] Therefore, Christian theology and Pancasila ideology are two sides of a synergy.

On this basis, the Federation of Indonesian Churches (PGI) synergized theology and ideology at the Session held at Ambon in 1984. Article 3 states that Jesus Christ is the basis, while article 5 affirms Pancasila as the only principle of nationhood and society, as well as a state in the light of Jesus Christ as the basis of faith. The church also contributes to strengthening a sense of kinship, openness, prosperity, and harmony amid the threat of closure, poverty, and division.[37] As shown by the above formulation, the church has provided a synergistic attitude with Christ as the basis of faith and Pancasila as the principle of national life. Living with a foundation of faith in Christ corresponds with following Pancasila, as none of its principles contradict the Bible, and even the five precepts are biblical. Furthermore, religious leaders have developed moderation harmonized through formal and non-formal dialogue.

Besides Christians, members of Islamic groups, such as Djohan Effendi, expressed the spirit of moderation from the synergy between theology and the Pancasila ideology. For this individual, building a Pancasila society requires a departure from the recognition of plurality, manifested in mutual respect and upholding the rights of others, which are no different from theirs. This means there is no domination and discrimination. From the Islamic point of view, Pancasila can also be seen, according to the Qur'an, as "kalimatin sawa," which are common principles in a pluralistic society. In line with this, Islam places great emphasis on the importance of fairness in ordinary life. This attitude must be applied to anyone, including groups of different religions.[38] Therefore, a peaceful life based on plurality in Indonesia cannot begin or continue, except through religious tolerance. For all Christians, belief in theological understanding (Christ) and ideological appreciation (Pancasila) as citizens who obey God (theology) is manifested by obedience to the state (ideology).

Consequently, theology and ideology do not contradict each other but synergize to produce a community that must be exclusive (closed) to its religion's final truth and inclusive (open) in social life with adherents of other faiths.[39] Furthermore, Christian theology must be inclusive (available) with general truths, such as a true and just philosophy or ideology like Pancasila, which citizens of different religions, races, and cultures are under. Certain religious theologies, for example, Christianity, should not be changed or compromised. Neither should Pancasila be altered or replaced with any principles, including those of any religion, as they are both

synergistic and not contradictory. Therefore, Christian citizens have dual power to live in peace with different fellows. It is the religion of moderation, as a synergy between theology and ideology.

VI. CONCLUSION

Religious moderation is created in synergy between Christian theology and the Pancasila ideology, without which fundamentalism and religious pluralism will exist. Christianity is a religion of moderation because theology and ideology do not contradict each other but synergize biblically. Therefore, it is anti-rebellious against the state, anti-colonialism, anti-division, anti-corruption, and anti-violence in all forms, meaning it is a religion of peace and peacemakers. It recognizes religious diversity or plurality, not pluralism, the truth of religion, not fundamentalism, and acknowledges the principle of living together (ideology). Togetherness is a strength. Hence, Christianity is a significant capital for developing Indonesia and world peace and a tool with a tremendous and strong potential to create unity and integrity among people, religions, nations, and the world. The unity of religion is a condition and capital for the development and progress of Indonesia and world peace, which is a manifestation of the role of Christianity (church) as the "salt and light of Indonesia and the world."

REFERENCES

[1] Hans T.S. Podomi, *Akar Yang Sama [The Same Root]*. Jakarta: Geneva Insani Indonesia, 2020.

[2] Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1992.

[3] "Is Religion A Power for Peace or Does It Cause Conflict?," 2021, [Online]. Available: https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zkdk382/articles/zhpq47h.

[4] "Institute for Economic and Peace, Five Key Questions Answer on the Link Between Peace and Religion: Is Religion a power for peace or does it cause conflict?," [Online]. Available: https://www.files.ethz.ch/Peace-and-Religion.

[5] Robia Charles, "Religiosity and Trust in Religious Institutions," University of California, Berkeley, 2009.

[6] John P. Hoffmann, "Declining Religious Authority? Confidence in the Leaders of Religious Organizations," *Rev. Relig. Res.*, vol. 55 Nomor 1, [Online]. Available: https://www.jstor.org/stable/i40090363.

[7] Stevri Indra Lumintang, *Re-Indonesianiasi Bangsa [Re-Indonesianization of the Nation]*. Batu: Departemen Multi-Media YPPII, 2009.

[8] Stevri Indra Lumintang & Danik Astuti Lumintang, *Theologia Penelitian dan Penelitian Theologis [Research Theology and Theological Research]*. Jakarta: Geneva Insani Indonesia, 2016.

[9] K. Krippendorff, "Reliability in Content Analysis: Some Common Misconception and recommendations," *Hum. Commun. Res.*, pp. 411–433, 2004, doi: 10.1177/2158244014522633.

[10] K. Elo. S. Kaariainen, M., Kanste, O., Polkki T., Utriainen, K., "Qualitative Content Analysis: A Focus on Trustworthiness," *SAGE Open*, vol. 4 Nomor 1, pp. 1–10, doi: 10.1177/2158244014522633.

[11] J. Nelson, C., Woods, R.H., *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*. London: Routledge, 2011.

[12] W. . Routledge. Vogt., *Dictionary of Statistics and Methodology*. Los Angeles. USA: Sage Publications, 2005.

[13] "Rencana Strategi Kementerian Agama Tahun 2020-2024 [Ministry of Religion Strategic Plan 2020-2024]." https://adminku.kemenag.go.id.

[14] Johan Setiawan, "Pemikiran Nurcholish Madjid Tentang Pluralisme Agama Dalam Konteks Keindonesiaan [Nurcholish Madjid's Thoughts on Religious Pluralism in the Context of Indonesia]," *Zawiyah J. Pemikir. Islam*, vol. 5 Nomor 1, [Online]. Available: garuda.ristekdikti.go.id/article.

[15] F. I. Widjaja and N. I. Boiliu, *Misi dan Pluralitas Keyakinan di Indonesia [Mission and Plurality of Belief in Indonesia]*, 1st ed. Batam: Andi Offset Yogyakarta, 2019.

[16] Ign. Bambang Sugiharto, *Agama, Antara Berkah dan Kutukan", Dalam Atas Nama Agama: Wacana Agama dalam Dialog Bebas Konflik [Religion, Between Blessings and Curses", In the Name of Religion: Religious Discourse in Conflict-Free Dialogue]*. Bandung: Pustaka Hidayah, 1998.

[17] Stevri Indra Lumintang, *Keunikan Theologia Kristen di Tengah Kepalsuan [The Uniqueness of Christian Theology in the Middle of Falsehood]*. Batu: Departemen Literatur PPII, 2010.

[18] James Barr, *Fundamentalisme [Fundamentalism]*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1994.

[19] Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Politic and the New World Disorder*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

[20] Deddy Ismatullah, *Ilmu Negara Dalam Multi Perspketif: Kekuasaan Masyarakat, Hukum dan Agama [State Science in Multi Perspectives: Society Power, Law and Religion]*. Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2007.

[21] Peter Suwarno, *Konflik Antar Agama: Kemungkinan Penyebab, Penanggulangan dan Penyelesaian-nya", Dalam Mediasi dan Resolusi Konflik di Indonesia [Inter-religious Conflict: Possible Causes, Management and Solutions", In Mediation and Conflict Resolution in Indonesia]*. Semarang, 2007.

[22] A. Dwi Hendro Sunarko, *Ideologi Teroris Indonesia [Indonesian Terrorist Ideology]*. Jakarta: PTIK, 2006.

[23] Einar M. Sitompul (Ed.), *Globalisasi, Kebangsaan dan Agama-Agama di Indonesia [Globalization, Nationality and Religions in Indonesia]*. Jakarta: Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan PGI, 2004.

[24] Lesslie Newbigin, *Injil Dalam Masyarakat Majemuk [The Gospel in a Plural Society]*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1993.

[25] Ken Gnanakan, *Proclaiming Christ in A Pluralistic Context*. Bangelore: Book Trust, 2000.

[26] Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes Toward the World Religions*. New York: Orbis Books, 1989.

[27] Choan-Seng Song, *The Compassionate God*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books.

[28] Stevri Indra Lumintang, *Theologia Abu-Abu: Pluralisme Agama [Gray Theology: Religious Pluralism]*. Malang: Gandum Mas, 2009.

[29] F. I. Widjaja, F. Simanjuntak, and N. I. Boiliu, "Repositioning Mission in Postmodern Culture," 2020, doi: 10.2991/assehr.k.200311.038.

[30] Stevri Indra Lumintang, *Theology The Queen of Science and The Master of Philosophy*. Jakarta: Geneva Insani Indonesia, 2015.

[31] F. I. Widjaja, N. I. Boiliu, I. F. Simanjuntak, J. M. P. Gultom, and F. Simanjuntak, "The religious phenomenon of Juche ideology as a political tool," *HTS Theol. Stud.*, vol. 77, no. 4, pp. 1–7, 2021.

[32] S. Culpepper, "Dual Citizenship: What Does It Mean to be a Christian and a citizen of the US?," *The Voice*, vol. 63, 2018.

[33] H. Henry Meeter, *Pandangan-Pandangan Dasar Calvinisme [The Basic Views of Calvinism]*. Surabaya: Momentum, 2014.

[34] Stevri Indra Lumintang, *Introduksi Theologia Sistematika, system berpikir logis theologia [Introduction to Systematic Theology: Logic-Theological Thinking System]*. Jakarta: Geneva Insani Indonesia, 2019.

[35] Abdullah Sukarta, *Kehidupan Beragama Dalam Negara Pancasila [Religious Life in the Pancasila State]*. Jakarta: Departemen Agama RI, 1982.

[36] A.A. Yewangeo, *"Kata Pengantar", Dalam, Agama dan Negara: Perspektif Islam, Katolik, Budha, Konghucu dan Protestan ["Foreword", In, Religion and the State: Islamic, Catholic, Buddhist, Confucian and Protestant Perspectives]*. Yogyakarta: Institut DIAN/Interfidei, 2007.

[37] Victor I. Tanja, *Spiritualitas, Pluralitas dan Pembangunan di Indonesia [Spirituality, Plurality and Development in Indonesia]*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1996.

[38] Djohan Effendi, *Agama, Ideologi dan Politik dalam Negara Pancasila [Religion, Ideology and Politics in the Pancasila State]*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1996.

[39] Stevri Indra Lumintang, *Finalitas Kristus dan Kekristenan: Arrogant, Tolerant, Ignorant?[Finality of Christ and Christianity: Arrogant, Tolerant, Ignorant?]*. Jakarta: Geneva Insani Indonesia, 2018.