



Mission Today

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Abstract. Examining the mission today in the context of society is the goal of this study. The challenge of the contextual perspective is the current social situation in Indonesia. The proposed outcomes demonstrate that preaching the gospel today involves becoming a witness for God and engaging in conversation in the context of society. How do we continue to uphold the Great Commission as evangelical Christians, is the question? How the text or message of the Bible can be applied in such a mission today requires a proportional-biblical theological foundation. The author employs a qualitative strategy to describe the topic of this discussion, namely the library method, in which the author will gather and evaluate the relevant literature, both books and scientific articles, and then conclude descriptively. The study results indicate implementing Mission Today in a Plural of Indonesian Society.

Keywords: Mission, Theology; Contextual, Plurality; Indonesia, Society

1 Introduction

The Indonesian nation is now facing big problems, not only the problem of the COVID-19 pandemic but also the decline in the character of society, which is marked by rampant acts of corruption in the government, intolerance, radicalism, violence, which are very worrying for individual and social life and even for the nation. It can't be denied that in ordinary people, until the elite, there are movements of verbal and physical violence in the name of 'religion' for particular political interests. These triggers social conflict in society.

Observing the situation must make all of us concerned and try to overcome it because it is our collective responsibility as part of the Indonesian people. The church in Indonesia, without exception, should participate in thinking about the Indonesian people's struggles in overcoming social problems that occur in the community where the church is present. All elements of society in Indonesia, regardless of their belief or religion, have a moral burden and are responsible for developing Indonesia according to their respective capacities. Indeed, churches in Indonesia, which are part of the community, are called to be involved in providing solutions to overcome the problems that are currently happening in society.

The act of love for others or social care as an answer to making the gospel a reality expresses the love of Christ, namely loving others sincerely as Christ has loved His

people [1]. As Jesus commanded in Matthew 5:13-16, the church is called to be a blessing and a witness to the world because the church was sent into the midst of the world to be the 'light' and 'salt' of the world. Even the church (whatever the denomination) is called to take part in alleviating social problems faced by the Indonesian people. Arifianto, Saptorini, and Stevanus stated that the social situation facing this nation is an opportunity to implement God's mission by presenting 'shalom' in Indonesia, namely reaching those who suffer by paying attention to needs amid society [2]. For thousands of years, Indonesians have experienced living as a pluralistic society in the sense of being multi-ethnic and multi-religious. Bagus Surjantoro is right when he says that for many friends from Western countries (in mono-religious contexts), experiences with people of other religions are expensive to learn. As for us (in multi-religious contexts), God has prepared and provided that experience every day before our eyes [3]. But in reality, the relationship between people of different religions remains or is increasingly becoming a problem. This problem was once categorized as SARA (Ethnicity, Religion, Race, and Inter-group). Even though it looks calm outside, we feel a hidden and turbulent tension beneath the surface. This is the urgency of writing this article that the church needs to have a complete and biblical mission paradigm. Here the author intends to correct and a biblical-proportionate understanding of contextualization is needed. This manuscript to contribute with "Contextual Theology attempts to theology from the philosophical and cultural foundations of context

2 Methods

The approach taken in this writing is descriptive literature, which includes a discussion of the issue raised by the data and an explanation of it. When this happens, the writing process starts with searching for relevant resources from libraries, other media like journals, periodicals, or the internet, and the book that receives the most citations [4]. Finding pertinent books and scientific publications on the subject of discussion is the first step in the research process. To ascertain the genuine attitude of the Mission Today in Theology, "Contextualization," and "Plural Society," the author then evaluates the theory proposed by the literature using the biblical text as the primary point of reference.

3 Finding and Discussion

3.1 Mission Today

McLuhan (1964) forever destroyed the idea that a message can be conveyed through a medium and received in its entirety, unsullied and untouched by that medium. In his view, the media not only influence the news, in fact, but the media is also the news itself. 'Medium is the real message' (channel is news). Witnessing involves both verbal and non-verbal means. Witnessing is the totality of our lives through word and deed. Surjantoro said, "Witnessing through actions often speaks louder than our words." [5].

In terms of the Mission as a whole, there is no Christian who in his mind can deny the increasing social concern in Indonesia in recent times. For John Stott, it is surprising that followers of Christ question whether social involvement is part of the Christian mission or if there is a conflict of opinion on the relationship between evangelism and social responsibility.” [6] Regarding Jesus, the true contextualized being, Luke records, “He went about doing good and healing” (Acts 10:38).

There are two possible attitudes of Christians to social reality in Mission Today: (1) Runaway, namely rejecting the world by turning away from it, turning your back on it, washing your hands, and being apathetic by covering your ears hardening your heart. (2) Commitment, namely participation by allowing ourselves to be dirty, scratched, and scarred in service to those who need help. If we understand mission as a human response to a divine assignment involving the entire Christian lifestyle, including evangelism and social engagement, we will choose the second attitude. In terms of 'contextualization', as long as it conforms to God's explicit purposes in the Bible (not the 'Social Gospel' or 'Theology of Liberation movement), there is no contradiction between the biblical text and the context of social responsibility.

3.2 The Need for a Balance between 'Passion' and 'Understanding'

The apostle Paul wrote, “For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but without proper understanding” (Rom 10:2). Repentance begins with the mind, and all practical implications result from that conversion are also based on correct understanding. (cf. Henk Venema: “Making others believe in Christ is not only the goal of Personal Evangelism but also a requirement for evangelists to carry out Personal Evangelism!”).” [7] Some Christians are overzealous but without proper understanding. On the other hand, some others were right, but without the spirit. Both must exist. Correct doctrine is a solid foundation for evangelism. Pre-Reformation theologians said, “Where there is a bishop, there is a church.” But reformation theologians said, “Where there is a Bible, there is a church.” Walter C. Kaiser said, “Scripture and Church stand and fall together.” The Bible and the church stand and fall together.

Doctrinal weakness will mislead the mission. Some people overemphasize the doctrine of 'Free Will', for example, to completely ignore the role of the Holy Spirit in a person's new birth. The claim of 'Christianization' is partly due to ignorance of the role of the supernatural in one's conversion. [8] What's more, the claim is based on a simplistic generalization that the gospel (the good news) is the same as religion. The view of the Universalism of Salvation is another example of a doctrinal problem that triggers the emergence of religious pluralism in Christianity. [9] The Great Commission was even completely abolished by Hick, Rahner, Panikkar, etc., by such isms as 'Christian without a name,' 'Christ hidden in non-Christian religions, etc.

Christians Integrated Life is a substantially systemic law. Within every Christian, there should be an integrated life of faith and praxis. Derek J. Tidball, in his book *Theology of Pastoral Care*, writes: “The divorce we have created between theology and practice has led us to big problems in the church that few can handle, and few can solve” [10].

3.3 The Need for a Balance between the 'How' and the 'Why'

One of the central issues that are often debated about church growth is: Is church growth a strategy/method issue or an ontological issue? Strategy relates to the 'how' question, which refers to a method, technique, model, or formula. Ontology deals with the 'why' question, which refers to the nature, essence, and identity of the church about God's purpose for its existence in this world." [11].

Practically, humans tend to focus more on the problem of 'how' rather than 'why'. But the true church is not based on what they do right (understanding the 'how' question), but on understanding the right thing, which needs to be done (understanding the 'why' question). The central question is not "How does the church grow?" but "Why does the church grow?" Of this, Tidball said: "It is sad that so many sermons, teachings or pastoral care never tell us the 'why', paying too much attention to trying to tell the 'how' or the 'what' [12]. In the context of Indonesia, the question that every Christian must answer is: "Why in Indonesia were they placed by God?"

3.4 The Need to Maintain the Uniqueness of the Basic and Substantive Doctrines from Christianity

An adage that is not serious and genuine and can never escape modernism's mentality is the statement that "All religions are equal". Although 'pluralism' is indeed the main word in this era of tolerance and in this 'global village', a critical attitude of Christians is still needed. Religious pluralism must still be respected. Awareness of the presence of people of other faiths and respect for those of other faiths need to be grown. However, the next step by assuming that all different religions have the same basics and substance is a step that can be done without taking it. David Tracy, a Catholic theologian, rightly said that for Christians, to answer the problem of religious plurality is not by abandoning the uniqueness of Christianity by revising the fundamental doctrines in the Bible, the special revelation of God, as John Hick did. [13] Likewise, absolute and defending the uniqueness of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity as taught by the Bible is not the same as what Eka Dharmaputra said, that closing the door of heaven from other people and monopolizing it [13].

Some adherents of religious pluralism believe that we do not need to absolute any religion. But they don't realize that 'Christianity' is not just a 'religion'. The more you learn, the more you know the differences, not the similarities. Jesus Christ is not a religion. He never founded a religion called 'Christianity.' He said: "On this rock, I build my church," not my religion (Matt 16:18.) He also said, "I came that they might have life." He did not say ...that they should have a religion. (Matt 10:10). Christianity is life. [14] Correcting Immanuel Kant, Buswell said, "There is only one religion, and it is valid for all men of all ages." For him, having a religion is different from having a true religion. "True religion means the right relationship with God tough Christ." That is why Oswald Sanders, according to his Christian belief, said, "Religion is not seeking after God, but escaping from God."

C. S. Lewis, the eminent British Christian philosopher, said, "The theologies that survive are theologies that defend difference." What is very important to understand

when dealing with pluralism is the need to distinguish between 'tolerance' and 'compromise.' Tolerance relates to things that are not principled and basic. Compromise involves matters of principle. Tolerance is the similarity of traits and attitudes, not the similarity of teachings or beliefs. It is an ethical stance and not a dogmatic one. If tolerance becomes dogmatic, it immediately becomes intolerant because it does not want ethical attitudes other than those based on dogmatic tolerance [15].

3.5 The Need for a Balance between 'Passion' and 'Understanding'

In 2021, 10,468,233 people were born every month, 360,187 people every day, 15,008 hours every hour, 250 people every minute, and 4.2 people every second. Every 2 hours this day, 6000 people die, and 70% don't know Jesus. These statistics would mean nothing to us if they were not accompanied by the understanding that every soul is loved by Jesus and that they have a right to hear the message of salvation. In his book *Theology of Evangelism*, Stephen Tong expands the motivation for preaching the Gospel in at least five ways: God's will; The sending of Christ; Encouragement of Christ's Love; Feelings of debt; Maranatha's Hope [16].

One of the essential characteristics of the Bible, among other religious cultures, Stephen Tong says, is the 'nature of war.' He said, "The gospel is not a movement for religious indoctrination, nor is it merely a rational theoretical teaching, nor a movement for the extension of ethical norms. The gospel is a kind of spiritual warfare that snatches mankind out of the stream of Adam's life back to Jesus Christ by the power of God. This is War" [17].

3.6 The Need for Mission Partnership/Synergy Today

In his book *Church Growth Today*, Rick Warren describes 'what can be learned' and 'what cannot be learned' about church growth. [18] There is nothing we can do with 'what can be learned' if there is no availability to be open to one another across churches/denominations in mission work. Only some things can be done together. But some things must be done together. All Evangelical Christians have the same mandate, believe in evangelism, and have the same challenge: how to convey the text amid context.

The President of the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Jerry Rankin, emphasized one of the essential points of the International/Worldwide Practice of Missiology: *Joining Others in Kingdom Partnership through the five levels of partnership* [19]. Only about 10% (= 600 million) of the world's population are genuinely born again. That means one believer versus nine unbelievers. Even though in its 'Bold Mission Thrust' program, IMB achieved the goal of 5000 career/full-time missionaries in 2001, the impact of this program globally is almost insignificant, as there is only 1 IMB missionary against 4.6 billion people outside of Christ. This is enough to prove that partnerships and synergies are essential.

3.7 The Need to Pay Attention to Political Aspects

The emphasis on this point is not intended to establish a 'This or That Christian Party', but to focus on politics and citizenship in the context of theological salvation. Quoting John Briggs in his book 'From Christendom to Pluralism,' Stott mentions two reasons for the emergence of 'religious pluralism' in Western countries: (1) The process of secularization, which is marked by the fading and shrinking influence of the church. (2) Politics of Free Migration after World War II. Again, in the West, this is a severe problem. The number of non-Christian groups (Islam, Sikhs, Judaism, Hinduism) plus other Christian sects is nearly 1.5 million, double that of Methodists and Baptists in the UK. According to Stott, the two attitudes that are most often raised by Christians towards this reality are (1) Coercion, that is, exerting pressure through legislation, and (2) Do not want to intervene (*Laissez Faire*). These two possibilities are closely related to attention to politics. [20] Stott does not advocate the two extreme tendencies above, which lead to 'practical politics' or vice versa, 'political apathy'. He offers a third possible attitude: persuasion through reasoning (argument). Christians need 'doctrinal apologetics' in evangelism (reasoning about the truth of the gospel) and 'ethical apologetics' in social action (reasoning about the goodness of the moral law) [21].

Christians need to have a positive attitude in correct and biblical proportions. Why? Jesus said, "Give to Caesar what Caesar has, and give to God what God has" (Mat. 22:15-22). On the one hand, Christians are "Citizens of the Kingdom of God" and, on the other hand, as "Citizens of the Republic of Indonesia." Citizenship in the world has limits, and they are determined by God. "...from one man he has made all nations and all mankind to inhabit the whole earth, and he has appointed seasons for them and the limits of their dwelling" (Acts 17:26). That is why the word 'ethnic' in the New Testament is contrasted with the word 'lao' (Phil. 3:20; Lu. 2:10).

The apostle Paul had a proportionate political consciousness. He feels the need to make a political defense in matters that are proper and reasonable. He realized that he had Roman citizenship and had certain rights because of that status (Acts 22:25-29). After discovering the Bible, the Romans tended to abandon government and politics. Their antagonistic and rejective attitude is manifested in their resignation. But the Apostle Paul did not want the congregation to be dragged to the extreme, but rather that they obey the government, by the understanding that the government carries out the duties and authorities given by God. Of course, God gave His authority to governments, not to make them authoritarian. Christians must recognize that government institutions are created by God's will (Ro. 13:1).

In the Indonesian context, every Christian is an 'Indonesian Christian' and an 'Indonesian Christian.' In the constellation of the state, Christians are the same as people of other religions. As a citizen no one can escape the existence of a citizen. It has political rights and obligations [22]. In response to the Decree of the Minister of Religion and Home Affairs in 1969, churches/Christians do not have to be involved in establishing and forming parties/oppositions. Refers to recent violent/anarchic acts against the church, regardless of the possibility of provocateurs, the politicization of religion, etc. Governments are expected to be prudent, fair, and impartial. As Weinata Sairin said, some high-level decisions require a review [23]. Here, the existence and role of

Christians called upon in the political field to enter the Legislative-Executive Institutions are very strategic, although they can be promoted by something other than the Christian Party.

The Bible emphasizes that Government is a gift from God. We can even agree with Rousseau that even the worst Government is better than no government because there will be chaos and anarchy everywhere because of the absence of any means of control. But Christians must obey God more than the Government if they are forced to betray God or deny Christ. There is a difference between 'respect' and 'obedient.' We can disobey the government without losing respect. This is where the church needs a 'prophetic voice'. Christians do not need to defend God. But as far as God wills (cf. also 'cultural mandate'), a prophetic voice is needed to defend the weak. God himself is the defender of the Christian.

4 Conclusion

The need to contextualize the gospel message in Indonesia is growing increasingly critical. The fact appears to demonstrate that human pluralism, which includes ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity, is multifaceted and substantially more prevalent in Third World nations. The term “contextualization” developed with the attention and focus on Third World countries, as this research has explained. The use of contextualization to spread the gospel message has risks, either because it is wholly disregarded or, conversely, because it is employed excessively. Regarding these two tendencies, we must understand that the practical theological level of praxis is founded on a sound doctrinal (the phrase “*Lex Orandi Lex Credendi*”). Considering the range of theological movements that sprang from the “post-first church.”

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