

# Development of Ecclesiology in Islamic-Christian Relations Post Conflict in Maluku

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**Abstract**— The Church is both personally and communally a religious community that God has placed together with other religions as a manifestation of the presence of God in the midst of the world. The world as a context in which the church and religions are present is a plural world. Christianity and Islam accept pluralism as an absolute part of God's actions that integrate all of His creation on the basis of mutual respect and cooperation. The uniqueness of each religion is the wealth that should be in dialogue as a strength of value that coordinate the religions themselves. The church sent into the world is a church that understands its presence as partners of God in realizing true humanitarian responsibility in building society. Therefore, the ecclesiology offered to be developed by the church is a humanistic ecclesiology, which is based on the unity of all components of society including religions in a unity that respects each other and cooperates in harmony and peace.

**Keywords**— *Ecclesiology, Islamic-Christian relations, Maluku.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The society in which religions live and act is a society that continues to develop forward and transformatively. The dynamics of the society contributes to change of religion as a social entity. This requires an attitude of openness to welcome "the other" and also requires courage to get out of the exclusivity of an ethnocentrism or religiocentrism community and share in hospitality as a "family", where the earth becomes a 'home' as a place to meet and stay together to unite differences. [1]

In Indonesia, Council of Churches (PGI) developed the "Ecumenical Universe". It is a relational and dynamic concept that transcends the fellowship of Christians and the church to the human community in the whole of creation. In PGI XIV Assembly in Kinasih, Bogor in 2004, in the Principles of Shared Mission (PTPB), the direction of the Ecumenical movement aims at realizing the One Christian Church (GKYE) in Indonesia.

A conscious effort to change the dynamics of society encourages the Maluku Protestant Church (GPM) to systematically and integratedly help its congregation to continue to exist in change. The second decade of PIP/RIPP (1995-2005) [3], reveals GPM's confession and belief that God

in Jesus Christ is the God and Head of all things (Ephesians 1: 15-23; Collosians 1 : 15-23). He also made the church "salt, light and yeast" in the midst of religious communities within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, especially Muslims as the closest relatives in the life of the nation and state.

The reality of the conflict in Maluku requires the humility of religions, especially Muslims and Christians to undermine their superiority and bring dialogue between them. There is no peace among the religions in the world as long as each one thinks of himself as an superior institutions against all other religions. The important thing is that the dialogue of believers must be continued on a broad scale. However the only stable and lasting foundation for peace is when it brings the right relationship to the ultimate reality. [4]

Eka Darmaputra proposed a perspective or religious direction, or the direction of church religiosity as an exemplary community. [5] That is, the church does not have a strong self-serving and self-oriented tendency, but for the church, the emphasis is on moral, ethical, and spiritual reinforcement. Thus, this ecclesiology paradigm will help the church realize moral, ethical, spiritual and caring significance in society and answer problems with religions and humanity.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The research This research is literature research. It is a study of literature to gain a theoretical understanding of the church that has implications in the context of plural society. The first step was collecting the books related to the topic of discussion, and the second one was doing the coding for the reading results. The third step is to create a resume of selected texts which are then used in writing so as to facilitate the discussion and writing in full.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Traditions is The Church as a fellowship of believers and institutions is placed by God in the midst of world history to bring God's love and salvation to the universe. The church's presence is not limited by the structures and systems that

confine God with His love within certain limits. It means that God's saving love is universal love, not limited by the walls of the church and or for the benefit of church power. [6]

Historically and factually, Islamic-Christian encounters sometimes face beautiful and harmonious times. It is the period in which the dependence of human life with various daily needs becomes inevitable. The fact of "everyday life" is the domain of encounters and tested interactions that are able to bond people together, especially in a society that upholds the values of tradition and culture that characterize the personality of the society.

These values already exist and become characteristics of society before religions exist and develop. Even those values have been tested for their efficacy in bringing people together beyond one's own religion. For example, *Pela Gandong* is an icon of social relations between Islamic and Christian countries/villages. The relationship begins with the promises or vows of the ancestors that must be obeyed. If that is ignored, there will be sanctions as set out in *pela gandong* bond. There is also a growing and developing tradition of collective work among society members called mutual cooperation or "masohi". The work system is used to do some works like public facilities and or places of worship. This mutual cooperation system does not only involve one community within the society, but all parties regardless of the religion they adhere to.

This very powerful system in Maluku has proven to be effective in cementing social relations across religions and ethnicities. Religion is not standard in fostering social relationships. It is precisely the norms governing the living order of the community into links that connect people with different backgrounds. The pattern of society interaction with traditional values which is a normative force is considered as something that must be obeyed. When violated, disharmony will occur in society. It indicates that society norms become a medium that unites and harmonizes these differences. Every individual with their own identity is born into a group<sup>1</sup> and is influenced by the values of the group.

The Church through missions and responsibilities is inseparable from the others as an integral and synergistic component. The unity referred to is a unity that complements, builds and revives beyond religious and/or church boundaries. The Church cannot forget its existence in the midst of a shared mission with other religions as partners of God. Awareness and recognition is also offered to the Protestant Church of Maluku as one of the religious institutions that realize its existence in the middle of Maluku society. The mission is formulated in its ecclesiological view.

The Protestant Church of Maluku, as stated in the preamble of Church Order of Protestant Church of Maluku, revealed its

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<sup>1</sup>The group in question is the family, clan, tribe where people were born and exist. The growth of each individual is influenced by the spirit of collectivity. Things like language, habits, beliefs and emotional responses always come from a social framework that shapes the perspectives and attitudes of each individual.

recognition as a church that also grows and develops in the context of religious pluralism. GPM is aware that along with church and other religions, it is their responsible to build a harmonious, open and respectful life for one another. In this perspective, the parochial and territorial ecclesiology directions as stated in the 2005-2015 Service Master Pattern (PIP)/Service Development Master Plan (RIPP) are not sufficient to answer the context of the service. In connection with this, after reviewing how the church has built a joint relationship with the Islamic religion in the past three decades, the ecclesiology directions that can be developed are as follows:

#### 1. Ecclesiology of the Body of Christ and the Family of God:

These two terms are often biased and distorted. Both the "Body of Christ and Family of God" are defined, *first*: the devoted fellowship of those who believe in Christ. This fellowship is formed because everyone in the fellowship believes and has faith in Christ as Lord and God, and head of fellowship. People outside Christianity must also be outside the unity of the Body of Christ and the Family of God.

*Second*: Christ is a marker of Christian Identity. That is, people who do not accept Christ as God are not included in that unity. Christ is the intermediary between man and God the Father. In Christ, God the Father manifests His saving, enlivening power. That is why there is a view assuming that apart from Christ there is no salvation. This very exclusive perspective then alienates the church from other religious institutions outside of itself. And even the church is seen as a super institution, the only institution that preaches Jesus, the Savior. On one hand Jesus is witnessed as a God who saves humanity from sin, and on the other hand the church views itself as a saving institution.

The uniqueness of Jesus is understood as the superiority of Christianity when compared with other religions. This superiority keeps Christ and Christianity in the middle of reality along with other religions. This is contrary to the mission of Christianity for the world in which Christianity grows and develops. In this regard, the question is how we should understand the Body of Christ and the Family of God within the framework of building a plural society. In particular, it is the starting point of the church to understand its existence.

##### A. *Body of Christ*

In the New Testament, the image of the church as the body of Christ can be found in Paul's letters (Romans 7:4; 12:5; I Corinthians 10:16; 12:27). Both in the Romans and in I Corinthians, the image of the body of Christ refers to interpersonal fellowship, that is, between man and God and man and others, and interpersonal relationships that aim to build fellowship.

The Church and Christ are united, because the church is the Body of Christ. However, the church is not Christ. In Paul's letters, the image of the body of Christ is used in answering the diversity of gifts in the church. In this

connection, Paul emphasizes several important elements in fellowship, namely: 1) unity and diversity, which is: the diversity of people united that belong to Christ. The unity of fellowship is the grace and gift of God in Christ; 2) horizontal and vertical interpersonal relationship, which is the fellowship between human beings and also fellowship between humans and God; 3) interdependence relationship, which is interdependent and complementary relationships that love one another, none is superior or inferior; 4) participation, which is the participation of all members actively, mentally, materially-spiritually in fellowship, service and testimony, no passive members and active members, no members serving and being served, no masters and servants.

Thus this fellowship is egalitarian and functional. In this egalitarian charismatic fellowship, the role and function of the individual is not aimed at self-interest, but the common interest, which is the growth and development (oikodome) of the body of Christ.

The views in Ephesians and Colossians are quite different than Paul's. In Ephesians, the church as the body of Christ is subject to one God, Christ, who is the head of the body (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Colossians 1:18; 2:19). Christ is the Head of all things, not only the church. But it actually gives a broad meaning that includes all beings and the universe.

Thus, the Bible asserts that the church as the Body of Christ does is not an exclusive and introverted meaning. The uniqueness of each is a fact that cannot be ignored in the common reality. Humans from any background have been born with their existence as made by God. What humans have is essentially the gift of God that must be developed in unity with other human beings. The potential diversity of each individual is wealth that harmonizes and synergizes people in an egalitarian unity. Thus, different identities are not placed in the hierarchical-structural way, but in a mutual unity as a family.

### *B. Family of God*

Just as the body of Christ, unity as the family of God does not refer to believers with the same religious identity or to the fellowship of believers in Christ. In terminology base, the family is the basic kinship unit in society, consisting of Father, Mother and child (nuclear family/*batih*) and each builds a relationship, whether living together or not, formed from blood relations or adoption. This family relation is also often extended to include the parents of a spouse, maid, or other relative.

Jesus builds a new paradigm of family, not merely refers to an interpersonal relationship that has a "blood" bond. Jesus extends the meaning of the family by identifying persons "who do God's will". People who are categorized as "Family of God" are believers who do God's Will through their lives.

Thus, the family of God is not limited by ethnicity, gender, culture or religion, but anyone who does the truth and goodness as God wills. This is in line with Karl Rahner's thought through the concept of "Anonymous Christian". [7] In this concept Rahner acknowledged God who freely declares

Himself in unnamed Christ. This means that salvation is not limited to those who respond to Christ's revelation and become Christians. But other religions can be a means of receiving salvation. A person who does not believe in Christ, but does goodness and righteousness as taught by Christ deserves salvation.

In 1 Timothy 3:15 and Ephesians 2:19, it does not refer to the family in genealogical terms; the relationship of blood relations between each member/individual who ties themselves together. The family of God is the one whose members are united in the power of the Spirit that leads to truth. All people with different identities have the same and equal position and are responsible for realizing mutual growth.

Each component in the family has different needs and also contributes differently. In a pluralistic society, families are groups or communities where self-sacrifice, love, sharing and compromise grow. This paradigm will provide space for personal and group development which complements each other. Albeit different, capable people will help those who are less fortunate, and the weak will be supported by the strong.

Family in a broad sense is everyone with a different background in life. Christians do not only inhabit this earth alone. They exist together with different tribes, sub-tribes, cultures and religions. To that end, Christians must understand and accept other different people as the fellow whom God places to dwell with peace and harmony.

Just as the earth becomes a "shared home: of all creatures created by God, the earth also becomes a home in which every human being is given the same and broadest space to express themselves for the sake of living together fairly, rightly and prosperously. Humans who live together are human beings with a variety of backgrounds in life that are blessed by God. This diversity is wealth that can be managed for mutual welfare. And therefore, there should be no imposition of thoughts or will from one party to another. Imposing the desire of a particular group means rejecting the necessity of God. The uniqueness of each individual/group character is a wealth that is valuable to integrity.

So the image of church as the body of Christ reflects the church's efforts to understand itself as a fellowship with different members, interwoven in a unity that respects and builds one another. As a fellowship, the church continues to view other religions including Islam as one of God's established institutions to build a framed life in strong togetherness. For that reason, the uniqueness and diversity of each member of the body is in the interests of the shared development of a peace-loving religious community. Meanwhile, the image of church as the family of God affirms the church as one of the religious institutions that together with others contribute to the peace, justice and prosperity of the wider society.

## 2. Ecclesiology of Hospitality

Social conflict with various acts of social violence has resulted in the attitude of mutual respect and fear and mutual

distrust between Muslims and Christians. Both religions try to avoid themselves from conflict-prone areas. Those people prefer a place to live with the same religious community, in order to avoid the danger and threat of violence. The level of vulnerability in conflict causes mapping of residential areas based on the religion adopted. This religious-based segregation is a strategic choice amid the threat of conflict. If this is not done, it will cause various consequences to society.

Previously Muslims saw Christians as a neighbor or vice versa, but since the conflict occurred there was a significant change. One religion sees other religions as enemies that should be avoided and must be conquered for being a threat. The worldview of the “enemy” will position other people from other religions in different places and they cannot be reconciled.

“Enemies” are unacceptable to be part of a common life and are considered different and contradictory people who will make it difficult to build a peaceful society. The Bible records that Jesus placed an “enemy” not as an opponent, but as a dignified fellow and therefore must be loved and even Jesus asserted to also pray for the enemy.

Jesus’ paradigm is the basis for the church to come out of the perspective that sees Islam as an “enemy” and reposition themselves as a fellow who can accept and welcome others in love. Thus, Islam in the sense of people and institutions must be understood as a partner to build an order of peaceful egalitarian societies by developing the ecclesiology hospitality.

The word hospitality is interpreted as friendliness, preference/willingness to accept guests. Etymologically, hospitality means a willingness to establish relationships with other people outside ourselves as others who are worthy of respect and who build relationships in friendliness. Other people are not just “guests” who by chance come and dwell in our home. They are neighbors whom God presents together to live on the earth that God has made for us to occupy. They deserve to be welcomed and accepted as part of ourselves.

In a hospitality perspective, each different person must act well and not be suspicious of each other, blend well and exchange their abilities and/or experiences. That way, every community must be open to new possibilities and new ways to see the world. That is why, in hospitality, the status quo of the “residents of a shared house” must be changed.

The Protestant Church of Maluku is a church that also grows in the context of a plural Maluku society. The existence of Islam and other religions is a fact that the Church cannot simply compare plurality which is the gift of God to His Church. This awareness and recognition inspires the church’s initiative when facing conflict with various social, economic and moral impacts. The Church must not be lulled by the bad reality of the impact of the conflict. The church on the one hand should proactively build people’s awareness of the reality of Islam as a religion that grows and develops together amid the social context, even though it is tinged with tension and conflict.

Therefore, the church cannot betray themselves and their mission in building and maintaining order, peace and

prosperity. Quoting Parker Palmer’s thoughts, Mechele Hershberger wrote, God has called us to bear witness to the unity within us in the way that seems outward, the life of the church, and the experience of the people expressing the unity we find in the Holy Spirit. The church is not viewed from doctrines or ritual parties, but rather how we live together.[8]

This is where the church becomes an open community and a part of the community with the faithful. Here is the real mission and duty of religions to dismantle barriers that limit inter-religious relations, especially Islamic-Christian relations. Christianity views Islam with a “new eye”, a new worldview, not as an enemy but as a neighbor. Both Islam and Christianity (the church) are the common forces that are called to foster fellowship.

True Hospitality is a hospitality that balances the willingness to accept other people/institutions as they are and presents these same people/institutions with their own values of life and faith as an integral part of the evangelization. Every person who is in the “house” (earth) that is made by God serves as a peace maker for themselves. And that becomes the share and the value for the person in broadens their presence with others in a sense of peace.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

The church that is sent into the world is a church that understands its presence as partners of God in realizing true humanitarian responsibility in building the society. Therefore, the ecclesiology offered to be developed by the church as a component of a complete religion is humanistic ecclesiology, which the authors call ecclesiology of the body of Christ and the family of God and the ecclesiology of hospitality. It is an ecclesiology based on the unity of all components of society including religions (personal and institutional) that are bound in a unity that respects each other and cooperates in harmony and peace.

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