HURIA KRISTEN BATAK PROTESTAN (HKBP) AND MUSLIMS

(Theological Explorations of the Batak Christian Protestant Church Understanding of Christian and Muslim Relationship in Indonesia)

by

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Under the Supervision of Professor Dr. Bernhard Reitsma

Assessor: Professor Dr. Benno van den Toren

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1. General information

Name of student: Putri Runi Herlina Marbun

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Date: 22th June, 2024

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2. General information about research and subject of the thesis

(Provisional) title of the research / thesis: **HURIA KRISTEN BATAK PROTESTAN (HKBP) AND MUSLIMS: Theological Explorations of the Batak Christian Protestant Church Understanding of Christian and Muslim Relationship in Indonesia**

Short description of the research project and method(s): This research is an exploration of theological-missiological understanding of a Christian community in Indonesia (HKBP) relating to Muslims. The aim is to find how can Christians in Indonesia strive for a peaceful coexistence with Muslims but at the same time have a clear identity or witnessing Christ. The methods that I used is systematic literature research.

Type of research data to be collected: Systematic literature method

Period in which the data will be collected: 15th February 2024- 22nd June 2024

3. Technical aspects of the data storage

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1. INTRODUCTION

Abstract

Indonesia has the world's biggest Muslim population, accounting for 87.2% (more than 207 million). Christians living in this circumstance encounter significant obstacles internally (living the faith) and outside (socializing). Christians are perplexed about how to perceive the existence of Islam. This master's thesis attempts to examine theological-missiological paradigms for the Batak Christian community to live peacefully with Muslims while also witnessing Christ. This study compiles literature reviews on interreligious interaction in general and Islam-Batak Christian interaction in particular. In conclusion, I contend that the dynamics of peace between Batak Christians and Muslims and witnessing must be continuously worked on. There are several crucial aspects to maintaining these two things in harmony. The first is a thorough grasp of Christians' fundamental calling held by the Batak Christian community, to be witnesses of Christ in the world. The other aspect of openness will stem from the knowledge that, in this broken world, the Batak Christian community like other Christian communities has often violated its identity throughout history, meaning both communities acknowledge the world's brokenness and imperfection, as well as the longing for completion and fullness of life.

Keyword: Batak Christian Protestant Church (HKBP); minority; witness; Muslims; peace; co-existence

1.1 Problem Definition and Research Question

This research is based on at least two fundamental problems. The first problem is the frequent conflict between Christianity and Islam in the context of pluralist Indonesia. There are many causes of conflict between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia. In many conflicts, often God as the ultimate reality, and ultimate authority is put forward as the motive for religion's involvement in the (destructive) conflict. Francis-Vincent Anthony and others distinguish four types of causes of interreligious conflict: socio-economic, political, ethnic-cultural, and

religious causes. The first two types are based on realistic conflict group theory, and the latter two on social identity theory. However, they overlap. In all four types of conflict violent actions are the means to (re)define religious identity and (re)claim the authority of one's religion, in which (re)definition of religious identity and the (re-)articulation of claims to religious authority can be seen as causes of religious conflict, especially in heightened states of uncertainty and anxiety. At the same time, these violent actions are justified by the ends.[1]

The most notable causes of interreligious conflict in Indonesia are political and religious. As an example, in socio-political causes, many religious radicalism movements in Indonesia have emerged since the opening of the political climate and democracy after the fall of the New Order in Indonesia. These radical groups try to promote Islamist ideology that is campaigned to all members of society to replace the democratic system that is considered to be from the West. Among extreme radical groups, the rejection of democracy is a fixed price and is often carried out through violent means.[2]

As in the religious causes, many conflicts are born out of a sense of superiority of one religion over another, either Christianity feels superior to Islam or vice versa. For instance, Christianity serves a similar role for Islam as Biblical Israel has historically played for Christians, and Jesus plays a role similar to John the Baptist in Islam.[3] With Christianity's setting inside Israel as the paradigm, later Christian theologies of religion tended to believe that other faiths were pre-existing traditions that represented human situations into which Christ entered chronologically and substantively as something new. Churches tended to frame not only Christianity's legitimacy and supremacy in these terms but also their positive assessments of other faiths in this way. However, Islam was an inescapable exception to this pattern, as it was written after Jesus and had already incorporated him into its framework. The inversion of this equation made it difficult for Christians to understand Islam as a distinct religion. Even Mediaeval Christian thinkers typically approached it through the lens of "heresy."This is a category focusing on those who deviate from the church while having intimate awareness of its roots and making an appeal in some part directly to them.[4]

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[1] Francis-Vincent Anthony, Chris AM Hermans, and Carl Sterkens, "7 Causes of Interreligious Conflict", in *Religions and Conflict Attribution*, (Brill, 2015), 168-170.

[2] Masdar Hilmy, "Radikalisme Agama dan Politik Demokrasi di Indonesia pasca-Orde Baru", in *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman*, 39, (2015), 408, 413-414.

[3] S. Mark Heim, "Christianity and Islam: Two Kinds of Difference", in *Review &* Expositor, 105, (2008), 28

[4] S. Mark Heim, "Christianity and Islam: Two Kinds of Difference", in *Review &* Expositor, 105, (2008), 28-29.

However, differences are inevitable. The church must always deal with differences, or what is now widely known as plurality. Starting from the early church where the gospel was first carried, it was a religiously plural world with many lords and many gods as Paul mentioned in his letters. The first three centuries of church history were a time of intense life-and-death struggle against the seductive power of syncretism.[5] The same is true of the HKBP (Batak Protestant Christian Church) in Indonesia, encounters between these diverse groups are unavoidable.

Encounters between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia are especially noteworthy because there are causes of conflict that have been explained above and many real examples of inter-religious conflict that occur in the daily lives of Indonesian people. For instance, conflict in Poso, Central Sulawesi that happened three times (December 1999, April 2000, and May- June 2000), Ambon conflict that also happened in 1999, or Tolikara Conflict that happened on June 2015. Specific examples of conflicts involving Christian and Islamic communities also exist. For instance, the conflict between HKBP (Batak Christian Protestant Church) with an Islamic organization in Bekasi (West Java) in 2010, or the conflict in Aceh Singkil (Aceh) and Ciketing Asem where the Christian community was denied a church establishment permit, and several church buildings were burned for several years, and the last time it happened was in 2015, even resulting in many injuries.

The second issue is that to avoid the tensions that may arise as a result of interfaith relations, many Christians have become inactive, avoiding encounters with people of other faiths, and neglecting their calling as Christians to witness in this increasingly globalized world, whereas Christians are required to engage with non-Christians to communicate our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Lesslie Newbigin in his book "The Gospel in a Pluralist Society" argue that Christians must share the gospel due to the outpouring of joy. The news that the rejected and crucified Jesus is alive cannot be concealed. It must be told. When we share it with everyone, we allow them to learn the truth about themselves and who they are by learning the true story of their lives. Therefore, the question of the meaning of the human story--both the

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[5] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society,* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989). 157. Although the concept of diversity has been recognized and faced by the Christian community for a long time, the understanding or position of this pluralist society has changed. Pluralism is quickly adopting the traits of an ideology. We live in a pluralistic world, often known as a pluralist society, where plurality is celebrated and appreciated. A pluralist society is one in which there is no officially recognized pattern of belief or behavior. It is a free society that is not ruled by accepted dogmas and is marked by a critical mindset that is willing to question all dogmas. Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 1.

universal and personal story of each individual--is raised, and the situation would never be the same. It will never be the same harmonies, securities, stagnant, or cyclical patterns from the past. Now, decisions must be taken for or against Christ, for Christ as a clue to history, or for another clue.[6] In short, Christians must bear witness to the world and their surroundings. Diversity-related conflicts should not detract from Christians' witness.

The problem now is that the HKBP is facing at least two of these problems: 1. Conflicts caused by interreligious encounters, that suppress-if not blocking completely- its witness and, 2. Difficulties to witness Christ without offending other religions, especially Muslims in the neighbourhood. And HKBP is still trying to overcome both problems. Recognizing and accepting differences, as well as being prepared to listen to others, engage in dialogue, and find peace in coexistence. Yet at the same time, as a community of Christ-followers, Christians are required to witness, to maintain their Christian identity, and to share with the world the good news that Christians believe to be true. These two things appear to be in conflict, moreover in a polarized society who see things and the identities are always set against each other. Men against women, black against white.[7] Being open to others is typically interpreted as finding similarities and avoiding differences in order to live in harmony. Witnessing entails the opposite: pointing out disparities and approaching confrontation.

However, I believe a Christian life should be a balanced blend of these two. Christians' life cannot be either just being totally open and even putting aside the unique belief in Christ for the sake of peace, or just emphasizing distinctiveness and giving witnesses. Christianity's engagement with other religions will always encounter challenges in the interplay between faith commitment and openness, and failing to recognize this tension may result in a problematic interreligious relationship. It is impossible to identify the precise dose in the context of interreligious dialogue. There is no correct percentage, final result, or exact balance.[8] This is a continual task.

Therefore, my **main research question** is: Which theological-missiological perspective on Christian-Muslim relationships can help the HKBP (Batak Christian Protestant Church) in their desire for peaceful living together with Muslims and their witnessing Christ? To answer this

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[6] Newbigin, *The Gospel,* 116.

[7] Bart Bransma, *Polarisation: Understanding the Dynamics of Us versus Them*, (Schoonrewoerd: BB IN MEDIA, 2017), 18.

[8] Marianne Moyaert, *Fragile Identities: Towards a Theology of Interreligious Hospitality*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 278.

research question comprehensively, the research asks the following sub-questions, towards one specific congregation: HKBP (Batak Christian Protestant Church) which serves as a guide for the study.

1. What is the context of the relationship between the Batak Christian Community (HKBP) and Muslims in Indonesia?
2. What is the view of HKBP in relation to Muslims?
3. How is peaceful living together and witnessing Christ from the perspective of a polarized society in Indonesia?
4. What theological-missiological perspectives on the Christian-Muslim relationship in witnessing Christ and nurturing a peaceful life together can be used in the situation of the Batak Christian Protestant Church (HKBP)?

Positionality

Other key characteristic of this research is positionality. My position in this research is as an insider, a Batak woman, part of the Batak Christian Protestant Church (HKBP). Being born and raised in a HKBP family has certainly affected the way I view the church and its relationship with the outside world. For many years, experiences of the Christian community and the doctrine of the community have in me and have formed me. There are feelings and emotions that the church imparts to me and acts as a force in my life. These experiences, sentiments, and emotions shape my ecclesial default mode. Therefore, in this research, I will try to explore my ecclesiastical default mode to help me recognize my latent values while examining and understanding ecclesial behaviours.[9]

1.2 Justification and Objective

The topic of the interfaith encounter between Christianity and Islam has been discussed by many theologians in various contexts, for example, Harold A. Netland in his book titled "Christianity & Religious Diversity" (2015), or Collin Chapman in his book titled "Cross and Crescent" (2007). In Indonesia, local theologians also have discussed it, such as Jan S. Aritonang in his book "*Sejarah Perjumpaan Kristen dan Islam di Indonesia*" (The History of the Encounter of Christianity and Islam in Indonesia) (2004), and Jamilin Sirait in his article

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[9] Tone Stangeland Kaufman, "Practicing Reflexivity: Becoming Aware of One's Default Mode and Developing Epistemic Advantage.", in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Theology and Qualitative Research*, ed. K. Tveitereid and Pete Ward, (John Wiley & Sons, 2022), 113.

"Lessons Learned after the Tsunami" in a published book by Lutheran World Federation titled "Bridges Instead of Walls" (2007).

However, most of these studies emphasize only the aspect of living together by maintaining peace between these two groups of religions, without giving enough attention to witnessing Christ. Mainly those previous research will advise Christians to be more open and to get to know the partners of the encounter, namely Muslims. This kind of openness without clear boundaries will only be disastrous, making the values of Christianity blurred. For example, if one reads "A Common Word"[10] without criticizing it at all, one could conclude that the simple solution to this relationship is for Christians to become more open. This carries the risk of emphasizing Islam's inclusive supremacy, the belief that Islam includes everything true and essential in preceding revealed religions.[11] As a result, the aspect of witnessing as a Christian amid a diverse world becomes more vague and less considered.

Therefore, this research wants to try not only to focus on the aspect of building good relations with Muslims but also on how to give witness to people around as a form of identity as Christian. Apart from that, this research will give a specific contribution because I will not talk about Christianity throughout Indonesia, which is of course very broad, but this research will focus on one specific Christian community, namely Huria Kristen Batak Protestan or Batak Christian Protestant Church as one of many Batak Christian communities, that I will abbreviate as HKBP from now on. So, this research will analyze which theological-missiological perspectives might be the most suitable to keep the tension between living together and giving witness to the relations of Batak Christianity and Islam.

I will do my research using theological materials from one specific church, HKBP. This is my own church, which may influence how I report its happenings owing to my insider position. This research may not apply to the entire Batak Christian community in general, but by

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[10] because "A Common Word Between Us and You", is a recent open letter launched on October 13th 2007, signed by 138 leading Muslim scholars, clerics, and intellectuals from around the world to the leaders of the Christian churches and denominations of the entire world. In essence, it maintained, based on scriptures from the Qur'an and the Bible, that Islam and Christianity share, the twin "golden" commandments of the supreme necessity of loving God and loving one's neighbor. Based on this shared basis, it called for global peace and harmony between Christians and Muslims. H. R. H. Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad of Jordan, "On "A Common Word Between Us and You"", in *A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor,* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 3.

[11] Jon Hoover, "A Common Word "More positive and open, yet mainstream and orthodox" in *Theological Review*, 2009,74.

conducting it, I hope to learn from this specific church what a Christian community can learn, and additional research is required to see if this can work in other communities.

1.3 State of the Research

Many academics have written on the encounters between Christianity and other religions, especially Islam, but I will start with **Stanley J. Samartha** with his writings on the encounter of Christianity and other religions, in this case, Samartha wrote about Hinduism. In one of his works "The Cross and Rainbow" (1988),[12] Samartha argues that Christians can never engage deeper in interreligious dialogue if they are already latched and chained from within by the evangelical assumption of the Bible's inerrancy. Dialogue, for Samartha, is not about conveying a message. Suppose Christians view conversation as a means of demonstrating the sufficiency and truth, the absoluteness and finality of the Lord Jesus Christ. In that case, the emphasis is on the instrumental use of dialogue rather than its intrinsic value as a living manner of finding new relationships in the household. Samartha contends that the commitment needs need to be made: to make it feasible to commit to God in Jesus Christ without taking a negative attitude towards neighbours of different religions, while simultaneously giving a more solid conceptual framework for discussion with these neighbours. However, one of the suggestions he made was to avoid the possibility of "Jesusology" and instead try to integrate Jesus more clearly into the structure of the trinitarian faith, which he refers to as "theocentric Christology". Such a claim of Jesus Christ's ontological equality would exclude any real engagement with neighbours of other religions or secular humanists. The notion that "Jesus Christ is God" is not what distinguishes Jesus Christ. His compelling argument is that exclusive claims isolate the community of religion from its neighbours of other faiths, causing conflicts and disrupting connections within the greater community.

Contrary to Samartha's perspective, there is **Lesslie Newbigin** and his book "The Gospel in a Pluralist Society" (1989). When Christians are confronted with diversity and perplexed by the emphasis on evangelism or discussion, Newbigin offers advice on how Christians should more firmly assert their beliefs. He categorically rejects the concept of "pluralism" and recognizes Jesus Christ as God's unique and conclusive revelation for the salvation of humanity. For Newbigin, the biblical perspective on the status and role of the great world religions must be understood first and foremost in light of the great reality revealed to us in Jesus Christ: God--

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[12] Stanley J. Samartha, "The Cross and the Rainbow": Christ in a Multireligious Culture, in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, ed. John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, (London: SCM Press, 1988), 69-87.

the creator and sustainer of all that exists--is an ocean of infinite love overflowing to all his works in all creation and to all humans. As a result, the Christian's most important contribution to the discourse with other religions will simply be to share the story of Jesus, the Bible. The Christians must say it, not because they lack regard for their friends' numerous accomplishments--many of whom may be greater, more holy, and more deserving of respect than them. They tell it simply as someone who has been selected and called by God to be a part of the company entrusted with the story, and with no responsibility to convert the others.[13]

Marianne Moyaert whose ideas might bridge the gap between the two very different opinions of Samartha and Newbigin. Moyaert, in her book "Fragile Identities" (2011), argues that we need to leave the conventional theological approach of religious plurality and instead pursue a theological hermeneutics of interreligious hospitality. Hospitable openness is difficult since different religions might be perceived as something that is challenging and not "pleasant" but rather just easily as disruptive or disturbing much like someone we would prefer to ignore. Moyaert believes this is a work that will never be finished. In the interreligious dialogue, there will be always issues within the interplay between faith commitment and openness, and failing to acknowledge this tension may lead to a problematic interreligious relationship. It is impossible to determine the exact dose in the context of interreligious dialogue. There is no right proportion, final answer, or exact balance. That is why the quest for God cannot be conducted outside of hermeneutics. Interreligious theology is concerned with dealing with the truth in an appropriate manner despite the fact that no truly adequate answer can be formulated.[14]

After looking at some research about Christians and religious diversity in general, I come to a more specific topic: Christians and Muslims. There are **Miroslav Volf, Joseph Cumming,** and **Melissa Yarrington** with the text "Loving God and Neighbor Together: A Christian Response to 'A Common Word Between Us and You'" (2010). First of all, engaging with this text can bring us closer to the Muslim point of view as well because "A Common Word Between Us and You", is a recent open letter signed by 138 leading Muslim scholars, clerics, and intellectuals from around the world to the leaders of the Christian churches and denominations of the entire world. In essence, it maintained, based on scriptures from the Qur'an and the Bible, that Islam and Christianity share, the twin "golden" commandments of the supreme

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[13] Newbigin, *The Gospel*
[14] Moyaert, *Fragile Identities*, 277-278.

necessity of loving God and loving one's neighbour. Based on this shared basis, it called for global peace and harmony between Christians and Muslims.[15]

There were several answers to this open letter, one of which was "The Text of Yale", and what Volf, Cumming, and Yarrington strive to do is offer insight into the motivations underpinning some of the possibly problematic phrasing of the Yale Response. One of the book's key ideas is that Christians and Muslims are called to compassionate collaboration with one another not *in spite* of their differences, but *because* of their respective beliefs. If both religious leaders recognize the shared focus on love of God and neighbour in Christianity and Islam, they may assist foster a comparable awareness for this truth in their congregations and communities. Love necessitates an acknowledgment of each person's intrinsic worth and a commensurate willingness to assist those in need, regardless of religious affiliation. The concept of this book is to live in harmony with one another without surrendering one's own identity or demeaning the other. [16]

Other research that will be one of the main sources of this research is from **Bernhard J. G. Reitsma** in his book "Vulnerable Love" (2020) with the idea of maintaining a balance between exclusivism and inclusivism in the church or Christian community. He proposes that the church should emphasize its mission as a visible expression of God's creational love, representing the creator in his creation. This is the identity of the Christian community. It is a very significant identity that the Christian community must present to the world, and it critiques the distortion of creation, exposing evil for what it is. He refers to this approach as exclusionary. However, despite this lofty mission, humility is necessary since, in this flawed world, the Christian community has frequently violated its identity throughout history. Christians and Muslims both share the brokenness and imperfection of the world, as well as the desire for completeness and fullness of existence. God's covenant with all of creation is the ultimate purpose of his activity, not the church. And this one, he describes as inclusive.[17]

In line with most of the main ideas of the previous studies mentioned above, the HKBP, through its confession of faith, has its own beliefs about relationships with people of other religions,

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[15] Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad of Jordan, On "A Common Word", 3.

[16] Miroslav Volf, Joseph Cumming, and Melissa Yarrington, "Loving God and Neighbor Together: A Christian Response to "A Common Word Between Us and You"", in *A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor,* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 51-75.

[17] Bernhard Rietsma, *Vulnerable Love: Islam, the Church and the Triune God*, (Cumbria: Langham Publishing, 2020).

including Islam. In its Rules and Regulations (*Aturan dan Peraturan*), HKBP recognizes its identity as:[18]

1. A communion of believers in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who are called from the world, gathered and sanctified into the church, and sent into the world to proclaim the gospel of God in Jesus Christ and to be a blessing to the world.

2. HKBP always presents itself as God's instrument to carry out God's mission as witnessed by the Bible based on faith, love, and hope. In obedience to God's mission, HKBP is called to always live the example of the Lord Jesus in giving, sharing, and sacrificing.

With such self-identification, it is understood that witness plays an important role in HKBP's understanding of theology. In addition, HKBP also believes that the call to witness must be realized. this is evident in HKBP's vision and mission. The vision is simple: to be a blessing to the world, and several missions. [19]

- 1st mission: to worship the Triune God of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and fellowship with brothers and sisters.

- 2nd mission: to educate the congregation to be true children of God and good citizens.

However, some missions show in detail what must be done to achieve the goal of being a blessing to the world:

- 3rd mission: To preach the gospel to the unchurched and those who have drifted away from the church.

- 4th Mission: to pray and deliver the *prophetic message* to the people and the nation

- 5th Mission to salt and illuminate Batak, Indonesian and Global culture with the Gospel.

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[18] HKBP, *The Confession of Faith of the HKBP,* Pematangsiantar: Percetakan HKBP, 130.
[19] HKBP, *The Confession*, 130.

However, while HKBP holds the principle of giving remarkable witness to the world, at the same time HKBP also recognizes that all human beings are one before God (Gen 1:27) and those who receive salvation are equally redeemed by Jesus Christ. HKBP emphasizes the importance of faith and our responsibility in the pluralistic society of Indonesia to serve the poor, the sick, the destitute, the sick, the backward, the ignorant, and the victims of legal uncertainty (lawlessness).[20] It is true that the foundation of HKBP is Jesus Christ, as testified by the Holy Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, the source of truth and life. In obedience to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it is also true that HKBP accepts Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution as the principles of society, nation, and state. This is also can be seen in HKBP self-identification: to continuously allow itself to be renewed to manifest the fruit of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. And also one mission that explicitly mentions interfaith dialogue. 7th mission: to develop ecumenical cooperation between churches and build interfaith dialogue.

Therefore, in the next chapter, I will discuss the context of Christians and Muslims relationship in Indonesia through the historical perspective. The aim is to find the dynamics of these relationships and what could be the problem throughout the history of the encounters between these two religions in Indonesia.

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[20] HKBP, *The Confession*, 130.

2. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS RELATIONS

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will look into the situation of interreligious interactions between the Batak Christian Protestant Church (HKBP) and Islam in Indonesia from a historical perspective. This is part of answering sub-question number 1 about the context of HKBP and Muslim's relation. I will begin with Christianity's interactions with Islam in general briefly then go to the Indonesian context. Starting with the history of these two religious groups' encounters, which dates back to the 16th century. Then, I will show the current state of affairs, where both Christians and Muslims have concerns about each other, which is certain to affect the relationships between them. Then I will get into a more specific topic, which is the interaction of Christianity in Batak society, where I use one specific church: HKBP, with Islam. This chapter begins in this way to show the dynamics of the encounter between these two religions which has been going on for a long time, and how diverse is the encounters and the varied impact of this encounter on both Christianity and Islam.

2.2 Encounters of Christianity and Islam in Indonesia

2.2.1 Encounters between Christianity and Islam in History

Looking at the larger context through a historical lens may help to understand the significance of Christianity and Islam's relationship nowadays. In explaining the history of the encounter between Christianity and Islam, I will use the writings of Douglass Pratt, a professor of religious studies with a focus on Christian- Muslim relations. He used the outline offered by Jean-Marie Gaudeul, a missionary and Islamic scholar, but he tried to re-interpret the historical process it yields in terms of a series of identifying epochs, which he denotes as expansion, equilibrium, exhortation, enmity, and exploration.[21]

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[21] Douglas Pratt, *Christian Engagement with Islam*, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 10.
doi: https://doi-org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.1163/9789004344945

The first is called the **expansion** epoch. In the early days of the mid-seventh century[22] the focus of Islam as an emerging community and nation was more or less focused on itself as the divine mission primarily within and to Arabia and, secondarily, to the rest of the world. In comparison, Christianity was largely settled, and the Christian response to Muslims was condemning Islam as an erroneous belief and stating that orthodox Christianity must defend itself.[23] The next epoch is called **equilibrium.** During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Christianity made an aggressive comeback. A wholly negative view of Islam was propagated through sermons and writings, while within and among the Muslim community, jihad was exalted in books and poems. Regulations concerning the *dhimmī* communities proliferated and intensified, resulting in humiliation. Concurrently, the rise of anti-Christian and anti-Jewish polemics spawned riots and massacres.[24]

The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries might be considered as the epoch of **exhortation**. During this, the negative image of Islam held by Christians had become the virtual standard perspective. Islam is considered as a falsehood and a deliberate perversion of truth. Muslims

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[22] Islamic expansion under the first four 'Rightly Guided' Caliphs – the Rashidun (632-661), Pratt, *Christian Engagement with Islam,* 10.

[23] The 'orthodox' were aware of their identity, espoused unity, and identified who their 'heterodox' opponents were. Therefore, Islam who embraced wide diversity quickly became apparent. At the same time, in Muslim-controlled areas, the contact and relationship between Christian and Jewish populations were dominated by the notion and institution of *dhimma*. *Dhimma* used to define Christians (along with Jews and anybody else who worships one God and, more crucially, has a revelatory canonical text) as 'protected people' because they are 'people of the book' (their respective scriptures. Muslims ruler has the responsibility to defend their religious rights albeit within the framework of submission to Muslim authority and payment of a special tax (*jizya*) in lieu of military duty. Pratt, *Christian Engagement with Islam*, 11-12. ; Schmidt-Leukel used the term "dhimmi", which means Christians, like Jews were treated as a 'protected community', but restricted from certain privileges and missionary activities. Perry Schmidt- Leukel, "Christianity and the Religious Other", in *Understanding Interreligious Relations*, ed. D. Cheetham, D. Pratt, D. R. Thomas, & D. Thomas, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 133.

[24] the Islamic dynastic empire's early and dramatic expansion was halted, resulting in political fragmentation and relative weakness. It was during this epoch where crusades to reclaim the Holy Land from the infidel were put in place, fuelled by the rise of the new European civilisation from Europe's Dark Ages. There was a growing mutual militancy and intolerance, with each inclined to invoke the concept of Holy War against the other. In the Christian West there was the European imagination that has long been fascinated by the figure of Pilgrim and Knight who are depicted as defending Christendom against its enemies', a motif that persist to the present day. This was an era of profound enmity and a fluctuating series of violent confrontations between Christianity and Islam. Neither side enjoyed a clear advantage. Gradually, the zeal for evangelical conversion began to subside, as did the enthusiasm for military conquest. Concurrently, each religion sought to strengthen its internal cohesion. This period marked the development of orthodoxy in Islam and the establishment of distinct criteria, principles, and methods. Muslim scholars have tended towards theological options that offer protection against what they perceive to be 'Christian contamination'. Christians were no less adept at producing diatribes that discredited Islam. This has been going on ever since. Both sides consolidated their prejudiced paradigms and platforms. Pratt, *Christian Engagement with Islam*, 16-17.

shared similar perceptions of Christianity.[25] The fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, overall, might be considered a period of hostile confrontations, or called as the **enmity** epoch. This was the Ottoman caliphate's heyday; for the West, the terms 'Turk' and 'Muslim' had become essentially synonymous and interchangeable. The Church's worldview, institutions, and practices were challenged and attacked. Islam was presented as a pure doctrine without superstition, with a pristine scripture and victorious history.[26]

The last epoch is known as the **exploration**. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries were characterized by 'Old Quarrels and New Perspectives'. This epoch is also an age of mutual mission, with Christian evangelism on one side and Islamic *da'wah* on the other. The reciprocal perspective underlying much of this age seems to be that neither side can comprehend their proclamation of "divine truth" without it being accompanied by denial and contempt for the other side's viewpoint. Nevertheless, numerous examples of the dialogical engagement that marked the exploration epoch can be found. Indeed, Christian-Muslim dialogue emerged in the

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[25] During this age, the worlds of both Islam and Christianity witnessed enormous shift. Muslim was seen as a religion of violence, spread by the sword, a way of self-indulgence and licentiousness, and inspired by Satan and founded by the Antichrist – the latter being identified as Muhammad, by the Christian. The Crusader states gradually declined and fizzled, while Islam reclaimed much of what it had previously lost to the Christians. Then came the Mongol invasions that disrupted and changed forever the shape of *dar al-Islam*. The seeds of eventual Ottoman ascendancy were also sown. A new Europe was emerging, bringing with it new cultural development, new prosperity, and growing self-confidence, as well as spiritual renewal and a revitalized militaristic outlook. Indeed, the emergence of this Europe predominated in the encounter between Islam and Christianity. During the period of Muslim rule, the status of *dhimmī* communities declined, as did that of religious minorities, particularly Jews, in the Christian West. The practice of humiliating and degrading others was a pervasive phenomenon. Pratt, *Christian Engagement with Islam*, 19-20.

[26] In this context, Christianity became preoccupied with its own internal problems, encounters, and clashes, resulting in an era of relative indifference towards Islam, though the tendency to see Islam as 'just another heresy that had to be eradicated, by violence if necessary' persisted. At the same time, the Muslim world expanded worldwide and culturally in India, Africa, and Asia, posing concerns and challenges for the Islamic Ummah. Ottoman dominance in Muslim regions, including the Middle East, North Africa, and Egypt, led to a focus on law and order. This included strict control over scholars and authors, as well as the domestication of Sufi brotherhoods. Islam has varying attitudes towards Christianity, ranging from indifferent to hostile. Both Islam and Christianity lived on the same earth, but separated mental universes. Each society's thinking, values, and motivations were increasingly isolated from the other's. During this period, there are clear themes of Muslim anti-Christian polemics. Interestingly, many Muslims used the same arguments against Christianity that Protestants used against Catholics. The early modern period saw both intra-religious and inter-religious dynamics. Pratt, *Christian Engagement with Islam*, 21, 24.

latter half of the 20th century assumed a new level of importance, and invited new prospects for mutual exploration. [27] This intensified in the opening decade of the 21st century.[28]

2.2.2 The History of Christian-Muslim Encounters in Indonesia

To come to grips with the history of Christianity and Islam relations in Indonesia, I use the writings of Jan Sihar Aritonang, an Indonesian, specifically a Bataknese professor of church history, which is titled "*Sejarah Perjumpaan Kristen dan Islam di Indonesia*"(The History of the Encounter of Christianity and Islam in Indonesia, 2016). Aritonang presents the encounter of these two religious groups in a chronological description and analysis of events divided into five periods, and I am not going to debate his analysis as my focus is use his overview to get a perspective on current relationship between Christianity and Islam in Indonesia.

The first period is a fairly long one, around 1511-1799, during the time of the Portuguese [and Spanish] and Dutch imperialist presence represented by the VOC.[29] By the 15th century, Islam had spread throughout the *Nusantara*,[30] including East Indonesia, specifically Maluku. In other words, throughout the Portuguese presence in the *Nusantara*, control of the economy and trade

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[27] Until the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church began to significantly contribute to the atmosphere of interfaith dialogue in the second half of the twentieth century, theological discussions between Christianity and Islam were characterized by violent polemics and counter-polemics. Prior to that, anti-colonial hostility and the shock of Western colonization shaped much of Islam's current position towards Christianity and the West. On the other hand, the post-colonial recovery and resurgence of Islamic nations has deeply revived a sense of Muslim menace among Christians. Schmidt- Leukel, Christianity and the Religious Other, 134.

[28] The exploratory theme in Islam at the early stage of this epoch was arguably more muted, but it certainly moved ahead during the twentieth century, especially where there was strong favorable exchanges with the Christian west. On the one hand, there is an inner search for self-awareness, appreciation, and understanding, on the other hand, there is also an outer quest for knowledge and comprehension of the external world, including the defining and constructing the. These centuries also saw the Ottoman Empire's fall and eventual extinction in 1924, as well as the independence of Christian countries such as Greece, Serbia, and Romania from Muslim domination. Tragically, this was sometimes followed with Muslim-led killings of Christians. In general, throughout this period, Islam was being assessed - or thought to be judged - from inside by some sectors for its abuses and temporal shortcomings, and it was described in terms of backwardness, fatalism, and extremism. Pratt, *Christian Engagement with Islam*, 24-27.

[29] There may have been encounters between Christianity and Islam in Indonesia (perhaps more accurately: at certain locations in *Nusantara*) before the 16th century. Records and allegations suggest the presence of Nestorian Christians (from Khaldea/Syria and Persia) on the west coast of North Sumatra as early as the 7th century, as well as visits by Catholic missionaries in the 14th century. Due to a lack of data and the presence of Nestorian Christianity in the *Nusantara* at the time, it is believed that the encounter occurred only after the Portuguese arrived. The Portuguese fleet arrived in Maluku in 1512, followed by the Spanish. In the same year, the Spanish began expanding their commercial network and spreading Christianity to adjacent areas, including Java. Jan Sihar Aritonang, *Sejarah Perjumpaan Kristen dan Islam di Indonesia*, (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2016), 13-14.

[30] *Nusantara* (the archipelago) is a designation (name) for the entire Indonesian archipelago, Pusat Bahasa, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (*Big Indonesian Dictionary*), Jakarta: (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2008), 1080.

remained in the hands of the Muslims.[31] During this time Portuguese and Spanish were more prone to regard Islam as a mortal adversary that must be defeated, if necessary through battle. Therefore, there were a number of bloody incidents in numerous regions, particularly in Maluku. There is also evidence of confrontations over biblical doctrines or interpretations, albeit these do not always result in physical battles. These encounters mostly took place between Christian foreigners and Muslim natives[32]

The second period covers the years 1800-1942, the Dutch East Indies colonial administration served as the official organ of the Dutch government. It was punctuated by the presence of the British colonial government (1811-1816/1825). During this period, indigenous people of many religions had more diverse experiences, with foreigners playing a prominent role, particularly through evangelizing agencies (missions or zending). This period saw meetings between Western evangelists and politically charged Islamic ideas and activities at the regional level, specifically in Java and Tanah Batak. At the national level, there were encounters with colonial authorities.[33]

The third period runs from 1942 to 1949 (also known as the Japanese occupation, the war for independence, or the Physical Revolution). This brief time saw significant events, such as the formulation of the State and Republic of Indonesia constitutions. The contacts during this period resulted in unresolved issues, including efforts to establish Islam as the state's foundation and implement *Shari'a* law for its followers.[34]

The fourth period occurred during the *Orde Lama*[35] (old regime: 1950–1965). Where the Constituent Assembly served as a forum for Christian-Muslim dialogue. During this period, Christians often sought favors or protection from rulers, which caused hostility among Muslims. Certain Islamic circles also wanted to form strong ties with rulers. Furthermore, **the fifth period** occurred during the *Orde Baru* (new regime, 1966–1998). During this time, there were numerous cases, events, and problems. While attempting to maintain contact with the

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[31] Aritonang, *Sejarah Perjumpaan*, 15-19, 8-9.

[32] The Portuguese and Spanish who arrived in Maluku had previously participated in a two-century-long crusade, which raised the possibility that the citizens and rulers of the two countries harbored a strong animosity towards Islam. The past between them determine the form and content of later encounters. Aritonang, *Sejarah Perjumpaan*, 18-19, 8-9.

[33] Aritonang, *Sejarah Perjumpaan*, 9.

[34] Aritonang, *Sejarah Perjumpaan*, 9.

[35] The phrase "Old regime (*orde lama*)" was not coined or related to the government of the time, but rather to the Soeharto (Indonesian 2nd president) which referred to the preceding rule as the Old Order after calling itself the New Order government. Aritonang, *Sejarah Perjumpaan*, 10.

authorities, Christians became increasingly dissatisfied as it became clear that an increasing number of official decisions and policies were unfavorable to them. At the end of this *Orde Baru* period (1990-1998), which included the founding of the *Ikatan Cendikiawan Muslim se-Indonesia* (ICMI- Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals) and, church destruction, Christians perceived a lack of support from the government. The Islamic side witnessed a renaissance, leading to a negative impact on Christianity. In the meantime, literary encounters have grown in intensity and excitement.[36]

The final period described by Aritonang spans the years 1998-2003 and has been dubbed the 'Reformation era'. This period was marked by serious and violent incidents and difficulties, particularly religiously fueled inter-ethnic clashes. During this time, K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) was elected as the fourth president but later died. He was seen as a moderate and inclusive Islamic figure, backed by Christians, but opposed by certain elements in Islamic circles. The US events of 9/11 and the Bali bombings in October 2002, as well as subsequent occurrences, have impacted Indonesian contacts and legal issues.[37]

2.3 Conflict between Christian and Muslim in Indonesia

In the last decade, Indonesia has experienced several incidents of communal violence between the country's devout Muslim majority and the Christian minority. For instance, the conflict in Poso, Central Sulawesi that happened three times (December 1999, April 2000, and May- June 2000), Ambon conflict that also happened in 1999, Tolikara Conflict that happened on June 2015, or the conflict in Aceh Singkil (Aceh) where the Christian community was denied a church establishment permit, and several church buildings were burned for several years, and the last time it happened was in 2015, even resulting in many injuries.

There are numerous other examples of Christian-Muslim conflicts in Indonesia, but it is worth noting that the early years of Indonesia's democratic transition, which began in 1998, were marked by some of the worst bloodshed between Muslims and Christians in its history. Violence erupted in places like Maluku and Central Sulawesi. They left thousands dead and tens of thousands displaced. These riots were distinguished by attacks on religious sites, such

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[36] Aritonang, *Sejarah Perjumpaan*, 10.
[37] Aritonang, *Sejarah Perjumpaan*, 10-11.

as churches and mosques. At the same time as these wars raged on the archipelago's periphery, religious minorities on the country's most populated island, Java, were targeted by ruthless vigilantes. Large-scale attacks and church burnings happened in cities such as Surabaya and Situbondo (East Java), as well as Tasikmalaya (West Java), in the years leading up to President Soeharto's demise (he ruled since the year 1966, and 1998 was the point of his downfall). At the end of 2000, bombs orchestrated by the extreme Islamic group Jemaah Islamiyah broke Christmas Eve celebrations in over 30 churches across Indonesia, killing 19 people. Every Christmas thereafter, thousands of churches in Indonesia have been guarded by supportive local Islamic groups to avoid future attacks.[38]

Of all the violent confrontations that erupted in Indonesia after 1998, the religious violence in Ambon was the most horrific in terms of the scale of death and destruction. This was a complex battle with multiple actors, phases of violence, and underlying motivations. The violence in the Moluccas, particularly in the Ambon city of Maluku and North Maluku from 1999 to 2005, was the most shocking in Indonesian history since the anti-communist pogroms of 1965/1966, aside from the brutal military assaults in East Timor (now Timor-Leste) in 1975 and 1999.[39]

Figure 1

Army members and debris from the Mardika market fire caused by the 1999 Ambon riots

Source: Tempo Data Science

https://www.datatempo.co/foto/detail/P2606200201350/kerusuhan-ambon

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[38] Melissa Crouch, *Law and Religion in Indonesia: Conflict and the Courts in West Java,* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 33.
[39] Sumanto Al Qurtuby, *Religious Violence and Conciliation in Indonesia: Christians and Muslims in the Mollucas*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 2.

The conflict between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia is certainly not a simple issue that can be easily determined, but rather an event that has a complex background, but I will mention at least two main factors in the conflict between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia: 1.) *Fear of kristenisasi and islamisasi*, and 2.) *Social-political situations.*

2.3.1 Fear of kristenisasi and islamisasi

Researchers studying inter-religious interactions in Indonesia have been drawn to the struggle between Muslims and Christians. Previous research in this topic (e.g., Hefner, 2000; Steenbrink, 1993, 1998) has suggested that Muslim-Christian interactions in Indonesia are generally pleasant and peaceful, and Indonesia was portrayed as an example of interfaith tolerance. Thus, the occurrence of violence between Indonesian Christians and Muslims in recent years certainly makes it difficult to explain the causes of these incidents. While some writers[40] attribute violence to non-religious issues, many believe that one of the causes of the violence between Islam and Christianity is the fear of "*kristenisasi*" (Christianisation) and "*Islamisasi*" (Islamisation).[41]

Melissa Crouch, a law and religion expert, argues that both Muslims and Christians share anxieties about "Christianization" (*kristenisasi*) and "Islamization" (i*slamisasi*), and one of the causes is the Indonesian government is attempting to legislate "inter-religious harmony" by establishing standards or limitations for proselytizing.[42] Muslim concerns over "Christianization" mostly target Protestant, Pentecostal, and Evangelical congregations. The

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[40] Nonetheless, these authors agree that religious differences between Muslims and Christians were instrumental in sharpening the contention between members of the political elite who were followers of one of these two religious traditions. They recognize religion as the primary identity marker for the actors involved in these conflicts. Alexander R. Arifianto, "Explaining the Cause of Muslim-Christian Conflicts in Indonesia: Tracing the Origins of *Kristenisasi* and *Islamisasi*", in *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 20, 2009, 74. doi:10.1080/09596410802542144.

[41] Arifianto, Explaining the Cause of Muslim-Christian Conflicts, 74. Other researchers with similar views include: Alamsyah M. Djafar, "Islamisasi dan Kristenisasi: Isu-isu Krusial di Seputar Proselitisme dan Hak Kebebasan Beragama", in *Jurnal HAM*, Vol.11, 2014, 115-138.

[42] Since independence in 1945, the Indonesian government has sought to regulate and manage religious pluralism. In 1946, a Ministry of Religion was founded, followed by a Presidential Decision in 1965. The law officially recognizes six religions: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. In Indonesia, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism are considered "missionary" faiths that endeavor to spread their beliefs. The Ministry of Religion is responsible for managing and regulating various religious affairs of these religions, including providing guidelines or prohibitions on proselytizing. Melissa Crouch, "Proselytization, Religious Diversity and the State in Indonesia: The Offense of Deceiving a Child to Change Religion, in: *Proselytizing and the Limits of Religious Pluralism in Contemporary Asia*, ed. J. Finucane, R. Michael Feener, ARI - Springer Asia Series, vol 4. (Springer: Singapore, 2014), 17-40, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4451-18-5_2.

distinction between Protestants (*Kristen*) and Catholics (*Katholik*) in Indonesia stems from the Dutch government's first regulations, which allowed only one church to operate in a given area.[43] Evangelical and Pentecostal churches are more often accused of "aggressive" or "unethical" proselytization in Indonesia.[44]

Indonesian Muslims commonly use the word "*kristenisasi*" to refer to Christian missionary tactics that are seen as unfair or dishonest based on who and how they target. Some Muslims see the construction of Christian hospitals, schools, and churches (especially in Muslim-majority countries) as "deceptive" proselytization practices, as does providing help or material support to non-Muslims to convert them to Christianity.[45]

Crouch, citing Abdullah Saeed and Hassan Saeed, claims that these anxieties of Christianization are due in part to the "Ghost of Christianity," which includes the defeat of Muslims in the Crusades, colonial conquests of Muslim states, and the collapse of the caliphate. Equally significant are the links between fear of Christianization and the colonial era in Indonesia, when Christians were perceived as belonging to the Dutch or the enemy.[46]

In the middle of the nineteenth century, the Dutch colonial authorities resolved to aggressively assist Christian missionaries' efforts to spread their faith among the Indonesian people. Around the same time, a new generation of Muslim clerics educated in the Middle East launched a religious reform campaign in Indonesia to revive Islamic doctrine and bring it closer to the Prophet's original teachings. The convergence of these two movements contributed to the development of mutual suspicions between Indonesian Muslims and Christians, affecting their relationships in the early twentieth century and continuing to influence interactions between members of the two religious traditions from Indonesia's independence to the present day.[47]

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[43] The Bishops' Council of Indonesia represents Catholics on a national level. The Indonesian Communion of Churches (PGI) represents the Protestant community. Crouch, Proselytization, Religious Diversity, 22.

[44] Crouch, Proselytization, Religious Diversity, 23.

[45] In Indonesia, attitudes toward proselytization differ within and between Islam and Christianity. According to Islam, Muslims participate in religious preaching (da'wa), although the use of coercion to convert someone to Islam is banned, according to the Quran 2:256 ("Let there be no compulsion in the religion"). Most Indonesian Muslims may not necessarily oppose Christian proselytization. Rather, they debate whether a kind of proselytization is authorized or appropriate. Of course, many Muslims are concerned about the conversion from Islam to another faith. Many Muslims regard such converts to be apostates or murtad. Concerns about apostasy are connected to worries of "Christianization" as conversion from Islam to Christianity are the most prevalent type of religious conversion in Indonesia. Crouch, Proselytization, Religious Diversity, 23.

[46] Crouch, Proselytization, Religious Diversity, 23-24.

[47] Arifianto, Explaining the Cause of Muslim-Christian Conflicts in Indonesia, 75.

Another possibility is that it was during the same period of Dutch colonization, that Dutch policies favoured Christians, such as providing financial assistance for Christian schools. This awareness of colonial bias and historical injustices perpetrated by Christians against Muslims was reinforced. Fears of Christianization persisted after independence from colonial authority, owing in part to a substantial surge in reported conversions to Christianity in the late 1960s and early 1970s following the failed Communist revolution in 1965.[48] A comparison of population data before and after independence shows that Christianity grew throughout this period. In 1933, Indonesia had less than two million Christians, accounting for an estimated 2.8% of the population. By 1971, this proportion had risen to 9.3%, and by 2000, it had reached about 10%. Regardless of the reasons for this phenomenon, these mass conversions to Christianity were a major cause of concern for some Muslims. This fear of conversion to Christianity and of Christianization continues to the present.[49]

These sentiments are mutual, and shared by many Christians, who are concerned about "*islamisasi*". "*Islamisasi*," on the other hand, is commonly interpreted by Christians to refer to efforts by certain Muslims to convert Indonesia to Islam under Islamic rule, rather than efforts to convert Christians to Islam. It therefore alludes to a perceived danger to religious freedom for religious minorities, such as Christians. While religious minorities frequently use the right to religious freedom, individuals on the other side frequently emphasize the need to protect the Islamic majority's right to religious freedom.[50] This dread, which has long-standing roots in Indonesia, persists today and influences how Muslims and Christians interact with one another, as seen by disputes between these two religious groups.

2.3.2 Social-political situations

Academics who study interreligious encounters often believe that Indonesia is an example of interreligious tolerance. This makes the conflict between Islam and Christianity in Indonesia a complex subject, and a great number of them found it difficult to explain both the high death

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[48] This is obvious from the many political confrontations that arose between Christians and Muslims, such as the 1945 Jakarta Charter, which Christians thought would transform Indonesia into an Islamic state. It was particularly evident during the early half of Indonesia's long-term ruler Suharto's tenure when many Christian leaders supported his regime's strategy of suppressing conservative Muslim political movements. This exacerbated tensions between the two groups and raised concerns about *kristenisasi* and *islamisasi*. Arifianto, Explaining the Cause of Muslim-Christian Conflicts, 75.
[49] Crouch, Proselytization, Religious Diversity, 23-24.
[50] Crouch, Proselytization, Religious Diversity, 24-25.

toll from these religiously motivated conflicts and the occurrences of extreme violence between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia.[51]

Other than religious issues like fear of Islamization and Christianization, some academics believe that non-religious factors contributed for the conflict. For instance, Jacques Bertrand (2003), and John T. Sidel (2006). They argue that the political elites in Indonesia, both at the national and local levels, were responsible for the disputes through their manipulations. These moves were made in response to the extreme political unrest that followed the overthrow of the Suharto regime in 1998 and the subsequent upheaval of the Indonesian government, which was transformed from an authoritarian to at least nominally democratic. These actions were a reaction to the intense political turmoil that ensued after the Suharto dictatorship was overthrown in 1998 and the Indonesian government underwent a radical transition from an authoritarian to a nominally democratic one. These maneuvers specifically aimed to reposition these elites and their allies to gain control of the governmental authority and patronage that were essential to their survival.[52]

According to Bertrand, a professor in the fields of comparative politics, the Islamization of the late New Order is one of the reasons that have contributed to the escalation of hostilities between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia. Past practices were no longer the case, as evidenced by the founding of ICMI, the tendency towards a stronger role for Muslims in government, and the simultaneous marginalization of Christians. In terms of governance, the establishment of ICMI and the concurrent marginalization of Christians marked the end of the status quo and the emergence of a new structure of authority is being constructed. Christians were concerned that majority rule or an Islamic state may emerge in the post-Suharto era and exclude them. Muslim organizations started to break their ties to Suharto, particularly the ICMI. They advocated for democracy, reform, and an end to historical corruption, but they also demanded the removal of laws that benefited minority groups rather than the Muslim majority. This stance sparked concerns that Christians—would have limited influence following Suharto's exit. Violence was thus more likely as a result of worries about the future, concerns

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[51] Arifianto, Explaining the Cause of Muslim-Christian Conflicts, 74.
[52] Arifianto, Explaining the Cause of Muslim-Christian Conflicts, 74.

about one's standing concerning other groups, and a perception of growing opportunity for change.[53]

Of course, there were other factors that contributed to the instability between Islam and Christianity in Indonesia outside the socio-political environment brought on by the government transition. However, it has to be acknowledged that it was a significant factor. Sidel takes a similar view to Bertrand, arguing that the attempts to (re)define the self and (re)articulate claims of authority coincide with increased levels of uncertainty and anxiety regarding religious identities and their boundaries. Indonesia's situation can be attributed to sociological and political shifts where there are internal changes and tensions within social classes, including the political class holding state power, as well as shifts within and between competing streams or between competing sects or sects defined along religious educational lines, were brought about by the capitalist development process that occurred in the country under the Soeharto regime (1966–1998). With these changes, there are more opportunities to portray Islam in Indonesian society, make statements about it there, and advocate for it. The anticipations, doubts, and anxieties that accompanied these changes aid in explaining the rise, fall, and evolution of various manifestations of religious violence.[54]

2.4 Avoidance between Christians and Muslims

Because there have been many conflicts between Christianity and Islam in the past, there is a tendency in the Christian community to be more cautious, emphasizing that faith is a personal problem and that some doors in interfaith cooperation should be closed. The reason is not only because Christianity is a religious minority, but also because there are many Muslims in Indonesia who remain alert for potential Christian missions. The reason is that Christianity in Indonesia is considered to carry a colonial background of the Dutch colonial power, which brought with it Christian missionary operations. Since many Muslims are still wary, many Christians also prefer to stay at the safe level of interreligious encounters.[55]

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[53] Jaques Bertrand, *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Indonesia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 90.

[54] John T. Sidel, *Riots, Pogroms, Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia,* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 11-13

[55] Mega Hidayati, and Nelly van Doorn Harder, "'I Love Jesus Because Jesus is Muslim': Inter- and Intra-Faith Debates and Dynamics in Indonesia", in *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations*, *31*.2 (2020), 184. https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2020.1780389

For instance, in 2018, in Cilacap (West Java), a radical Islamic group named *Forum Umat Islam* (FUI/ Islamic Society Forum) placed a billboard with big letters 'I Love Jesus because Jesus is Moslem' and 'Tolerance does not equal pluralism (*Toleransi tidak sama dengan pluralisme*)' (see figure 1). In the smaller letters, it is written: "I am Muslim, I do not celebrate Christmas or New Year, I do not participate in the worship of worshippers other than Allah, I do not love ISA as a servant and his Rosul. Umar bin Khatab the apostle of Allah said "We are honoured by Allah with Islam, whoever seeks honour other than with Islam then Allah will humble him". The Rasulullah Messenger of Allah (*sallallahu alaihi wa sallam*) said: Whoever imitates a people is one of them".[56]

Figure 2

https://www.filepicker.io/api/file/tfSIovHwQHeiwv1nrj0o

Mega Hidayati, an Indonesian lecturer at the Doctoral Programme in Political Islam, and Nelly van Doorn Harder, a Dutch religious studies professor, conducted research on this event. They found that the look of this billboard reflects the opinions held by Muslims and Christians in

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[56] The original text on the billboard was: Saya muslim, tidak merayakan natal/ tahun baru masehi, tidak mengikuti ibadahnya penyembah selain Allah, tidak mencintai ISA sebagai hamba dan Rosulnya.Umar bin Khatab rasul Allah berkata "kita dimuliakan Allah dengan Islam, barang siapa yang mencari kemuliaan selain dengan Islam maka Allah akan merendahkannya.Rasulullah Shallallahu alaihi wa sallam bersabda: barang siapa menyerupai suatu kaum maka ia termasuk golongannya.

Indonesia toward one another. The truth is that, while increased interaction between the two groups may result in stronger forms of collaboration or reconciliation when interreligious strife occurs, everyone concerned prefers to avoid it. Instead, they seek to preserve an equilibrium that reflects the status quo. Most Muslim and Christian leaders, for various reasons, remain opposed to engaging in deeper talks, particularly those concerning the significance of Jesus in their respective religions. [57]

This amplify that Christians in Indonesia avoid engagements with Muslims due to past conflicts. Even when there is interaction or dialogue, Christians prefer to avoid talking about Jesus to maintain peace, although Christians are called to tell others about Jesus Christ. The proclamation that rejected and crucified Jesus is alive cannot be silenced.[58]

2.5 HKBP Engaging with Islam

HKBP has its own notion of interreligious cooperation and its own view about other religions including Islam. I have discussed it briefly in the first chapter. In this part I will discuss encounters in daily life. It has numerous possibilities, including compatibility as well as contradiction to what is said as its views. There are some examples of HKBP encounters with Islam. First, those who share HKBP's objective of being an inclusive church. For example, in 2010, HKBP signed a collaboration agreement with the Executive Board of Nahdlatul Ulama (PBNU)[59] to collaborate on leadership training and poverty campaigning. At the time, the partnership inked by PBNU Chairman KH Said Aqil Siradj and HKBP President Ephorus Bonar Napitupulu was described as an endeavour to get to know each other and communicate more effectively between the two parties.[60]

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[57] Mega Hidayati, and Nelly van Doorn Harder, "'I Love Jesus Because Jesus is Muslim': Inter- and Intra Faith Debates and Dynamics in Indonesia", in *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations*, *31*.2 (2020), 173–190. https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2020.1780389

[58] Newbigin, *The Gospel,* 116.

[59] It I also important to note that Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is the largest Islamic organization with more that 90 millions adherent from various circles of society and it is this group that often trumpets the idea that Muslims should treat people of other faiths better, for example by stopping referring to them as *qafir*. Patric Winn, *The world's largest Islamic group wants Muslim to stop saying 'infidel'*. https://theworld.org/stories/2019/03/08/world-s-largest-islamic-group-wants-muslims-stop-saying-infidel access 15th May.

[60] PBNU Collaborates with HKBP, Despite Conflict Prone Areas. https://www.voa-islam.com/read/indonesiana/2010/10/19/11042/pbnu-jalin-kerjasama-dengan-hkbp-meski-di-daerah-rawan-konflik/ access 15th May 2024.

Another example is when HKBP, through representatives of some of its leaders, visited the Muhammadiyah Da'wah Centre, Menteng, Central Jakarta to stay in touch, and also to extend an invitation to Muhammadiyah to attend a national dialogue event to be held in Jakarta. The event itself is expected to be attended by between 700-1000 guests. Secretary of Specialized Da'wah Institute (LDK) of Muhammadiyah Leadership Centre (PP Muhammadiyah), Faozan Amar said "Hopefully, this visit will be the beginning of synergy, building people, and making Indonesia more advanced. However, each of us has tremendous potential and if synergized, it will certainly be a strength to make Indonesia more prosperous and prosperous,". This shows the awareness of the need to work together and prioritize similarities over differences.[61]

However, there is also another side to the encounter between the HKBP church and Islam in Indonesia, which is conflict - and it often occurs in the process of establishing building of worship. This concern is one of the motivations behind different anarchist acts. Minority religions frequently face challenges in constructing worship buildings, because establishing buildings of worship might present a significant threat, and people often associate it with a sense of danger. If Muslims constitute the majority, the rise of Christianity (church) poses a challenge to them. In contrast, if there is a Christian majority, Islamic buildings (mosques) may pose a threat. As a minority citizen, establishing a house of worship might be challenging in each location.[62]

I will show at least two cases, one from West Java province (Bekasi city), and one from North Sumatra province (Deli Serdang district). A conflict between Islam and Christianity erupted in Ciketing Asem, Bekasi, in the year 2010. The rise of Christianity in Ciketing Asem began in the 1990s with only ten families of HKBP members, a Batak tribe living in the area. The number of members continued to grow, and on June 13, 1997, Ephorus of HKBP issued Decree No.330/L05/VI/1997, recognizing this congregation as a full one named HKBP Pondok Timur Indah. Since it had begun to grow, they decided to apply for church construction permission from the local city government in 1995, 2005, and most recently 2010 (which resulted in disputes with local neighbors). Adon Nasrullah Jamaludin examined these conflicts and argued that the high level of religious sensitivity is primarily due to factors outside the substance of

[61] "Gathering at PP Muhammadiyah, HKBP Church: We Really Feel Friendship Here", https://muhammadiyah.or.id/2022/08/silaturahmi-ke-pp-muhammadiyah-gereja-hkbp-persahabatan-benar-benar-kami-rasakan-di-sini/ access 15th May 2024.
[62] Adon Nasrullah Jamaludin, "Konflik dan Integrasi Pendirian Rumah Ibadah di Kota Bekasi", in *Socio Politica: Jurnal Ilmiah Jurusan Sosiologi,* Vol.8, (2018), 228.

religion itself. Internal issues include property conflicts and violations of government restrictions for building of worship, whereas external factors include conflicting interests, varying interpretations of rules, and ethnic and cultural disparities.[63]

However, I disagree with Jamaludin. As stated by Arifinsyah and Fitriani, this conflict may indeed happen because of the violation of government regulations related to the construction of places of worship, but more fundamentally it is because of the excessive religious emotions of the local youth, the rejection of Muslims to the existence of the HKBP church, the feeling that the position of the HKBP is church that disturbed the local community, the feeling that the position of the mosque could be threatened by the church whose building is more magnificent.[64]

The information I can acquire at this moment is rather limited, therefore further study will be required by speaking with people on the ground, or at the grassroot level, to gain a more complete picture. Because of time and space constraints, all I'm attempting to accomplish right now is provide a theoretical framework to aid in future study.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion in this chapter, it can be seen that Christianity-Islam encounters in Indonesia is influenced by the long history of contact between the two religions, starting from the Portuguese-Spanish and Dutch imperialist periods in the early 1500s to the reform era (1998-2003) - which is also influenced by the encounter of Christianity and Islam in general as described by Douglass Pratt. The lengthy history of Islam and Christianity in Indonesia reveals at least two characteristics of their encounter: conflict and avoidance. And these two things are undoubtedly influenced by numerous complex circumstances. For example, in a conflict, the factors could be fear of *islamisasi* and *kristenisasi*, and it also could be the social-political situations. This broader framework of relationships in Indonesia has also shaped how HKBP perceives Islam and responds to it in encounters. So, now after discussing the history of Christianity's and HKBP's encounters with Islam, what is Christian theology perspective (s) on these encounters? And how do the perspectives affects the relations between Christians and Muslim that seeks for peace in coexistence while being faithful to Christ? This will be discussed in the next chapter.

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[63] Jamaludin, Konflik dan Integrasi, 236-237.
[64] Arifinsyah, and Fitriani, "Konflik Rumah Ibadah: Studi Kasus Relokasi Gereja HKBP Desa Laut Dendang), in *Jurnal Ushuluddin*, (2019), 2.

3. THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF HKBP AND MUSLIM RELATIONS

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will look into the relationships between Christian, including HKBP as a community and Muslims through theological perspective. First, I will explain briefly the typology from Alan Race: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism, as the classical framework in ordering different Christian perspectives on other religions. Second, I will discuss briefly about the idea of Pancasila in Indonesia as the constitution of the state, which when compared with the theological perspective of HKBP that claimed itself as an inclusive church somehow both could be seen as in line.

3.2 Christian Approach to Other Faiths: Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Pluralism

Many people have critiqued this typology. Some suggest there are more than three alternatives. Some claim that there are fewer possibilities. Paul Hedges in his writing "A reflection on Typologies" (2008), recognizes the shortcomings, that this is a simplified account and does not accurately capture the intricacies and variances within each position.[65] However, he emphasizes its usefulness in a *theologia religionum*. Two things to keep in mind. The framework provides a descriptive overview of various Christian perspectives on other religions. Religion theologies typically focus on defining who is 'within' and 'outside' the religious group through the concept of salvation. Thus, this is ways of thinking or theological perspectives of salvation, that still can lead to different approach or attitude from Christians to other religions including Muslims.[66] Regardless how this typology cannot encompass all perspectives on religious diversity, If ones don't oversimplify reality, the model can still be useful. And some churches, such as the HKBP still continue to claim to follow one of these three perspectives. In this case, HKBP defined itself as an inclusive church. Therefore, I will briefly explain this typology.

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[65] Paul Hedges, "A Reflection on Typologies: Negotiating a Fast-Moving Discussion", in *SCM Core Text: Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*, ed. Paul Hedges and Alan Race, (London: SCM Press, 2008), 18.
[66] Bernhard Reitsma, "Exclusion versus Inclusion: Searching for Religious Inspiration", in *Religiously Exclusive, Socially Inclusive? A Religious Response*, ed. Bernhard Reitsma and Erika can Nes-Visscher, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023), 12-16.

Exclusivism refers to systems that barred non-Christians from salvation, with its advocates believing that unless one proclaimed personal trust in Jesus or joined to the correct wing of the Church, the only option was damnation and hellfire. In general, an exclusivist believes that God revealed himself through just one way (Jesus) and one tradition (Christianity). Another type is *inclusivism* which refers to individuals who want to include believers from other religious traditions in the list of persons who can be saved. As a result, if someone followed their community's moral laws and norms, they were aware of a 'natural law' that God had made available in all people's hearts, thus they were being led in the right direction, coming to salvation through their own tradition while in this life, and possibly being confronted with Christ at the Last Judgment. Lastly, *pluralism* argues that no single tradition monopolizes revelation or salvation, and there is no way to distinguish between claims to be 'saved' by persons of any faith, all of whom earnestly and fully belong to their tradition. Pluralists argue that each religion has a limited understanding of transcendent reality ('God').[67]

Another issue in this typology is, that this typology cannot be extended to non-Christian religions without imposing Christian values such as Christ and salvation. For example, Abraham Veléz de Cea, a professor of Religion and Philosophy with focus in Comparative Theology of Religions and Buddhist-Christian dialogue, believes that Race's typology should be expanded and redefined so that it can be applied across religions without imposing Christian concerns and conceptions of what is most important on other religions. Interreligious interactions that prioritizes Christian concerns about God and salvation can hinder understanding of non-Christian perspectives on what is truly essential. It does not imply that Christians should engage in interreligious conversation without considering God and salvation. He suggests that Christians should not assume that everyone has the same interests and priorities.[68]"

3.2.1 Relationships of HKBP and Islam

There isn't a lot of literature that directly discusses this encounter, but I was able to gather some information from certain sources, which helped me to comprehend HKBP's perspective on

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Islam. Several documents can be used as sources to see how HKBP views Islam, but one of the most reliable is HKBP's main theological document, in its Rules and Regulations (*Aturan dan Peraturan*), and also in its confession of faith. First, in its Rules and Regulations, HKBP recognizes its identity as:[69]

3. A communion of believers in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who are called from the world, gathered and sanctified into the church, and sent into the world to proclaim the gospel of God in Jesus Christ and to be a blessing to the world.

4. HKBP always presents itself as God'*s* instrument to carry out God's mission as witnessed by the Bible based on faith, love, and hope. In obedience to God's mission, HKBP is called to always live the example of the Lord Jesus in giving, sharing, and sacrificing.

With such self-identification, it is understood that witness plays an important role in HKBP's understanding of theology. In addition, HKBP also believes that the call to witness must be realized. this is evident in HKBP's vision and mission. The vision is simple: to be a blessing to the world, and several missions. I already mentioned all of HKBP's vision as a church, I will only show some specific that relate to the relationships with other religions: [70]

- 3rd mission: To preach the gospel to the unchurched and those who have drifted away from the church.

- 4th Mission: to pray and deliver the *prophetic message* to the people and the nation

- 5th Mission to salt and illuminate Batak, Indonesian and Global culture with the Gospel.

However, while HKBP holds the principle of giving remarkable witness to the world, at the same time HKBP also recognizes that all human beings are one before God (Gen 1:27) and those who receive salvation are equally redeemed by Jesus Christ. HKBP emphasizes the importance of faith and our responsibility in the pluralistic society of Indonesia to serve the

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[69] HKBP, *The Confession of Faith of the HKBP,* Pematangsiantar: Percetakan HKBP, 130.
[70] HKBP, *The Confession*, 130.

poor, the sick, the destitute, the sick, the backward, the ignorant, the victims of legal uncertainty (lawlessness).[71]

The foundation of HKBP is indeed Jesus Christ, as testified by the Holy Scriptures, the Old and New Testaments, the source of truth and life, but it is also true that HKBP accepts Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution as the principles of society, nation and state. And this is also can be seen in HKBP self-identification: to continuously allow itself to be renewed to manifest the fruit of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. And also one mission that explicitly mentions interfaith dialogue. 7th mission: to develop ecumenical cooperation between churches and build interfaith dialogue.

3.2.2 HKBP- Inclusivism

Despite the problems inherent in this typology, some Indonesian churches continue to use it as a reference for attitudes towards people outside the church itself. For instance, HKBP. When interacting with people of different religion, HKBP considers itself to be an inclusive church. According to 1 Timothy 2:4, salvation is solely a gift from God, and God desires that many people believe and be saved. The church preaches the Gospel, but God retains the right of election. As God's people, we believe in Christ as the means of salvation but do not judge others who do not share our beliefs. God alone chooses salvation, and we labor together to fulfil His mission (*missio Dei*).[72]

In its latest ministry orientation in 2024, HKBP raised the theme of 'inclusive ecumenism'. Inclusive ecumenism means joining the procession of churches in Indonesia, Asia and the world for the realization of justice, peace, and the integrity of creation, in a spirit of mutual respect for differences through dialogue and unity in action. Inclusiveness does not mean sacrificing one's identity, but rather remaining open to differences and prioritizing dialogue and cooperation. With this understanding then the whole church has a shared commitment to fostering an inclusive spirit that is born continuously.[73]

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[71] HKBP, *The Confession*, 130.
[72] Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP), *Buku Panduan Tahun Oikumene Inklusif 2024*, (2024), 15.
[73] HKBP, *Buku Panduan*, 13.

Of course, in order to fulfil this inclusive commitment, the church must dare to participate in the common life in Christ while maintaining its authenticity and sincerity in order to carry out its witness and common mission for the entire creation. For so, HKBP must be able to expand its 'world' of reach and join a larger fellowship in Christ. HKBP thus supports dialogue and collaboration with different religious communities, cultural and indigenous organizations, and faiths. Dialogue is a tool for fostering mutual respect, particularly among religious communities and churches. Furthermore, discussion serves as a forum for aligning perspectives and focusing attention on shared concerns about social and political issues. This allows for optimal output. Through communication and cooperation, the church's mission to bless the nations can be more effectively implemented.[74]

In his new year sermon on January 1, 2024, HKBP's Ephorus[75] stated, "Our ministry orientation in 2024 is the year of inclusive Oikumene, and we are reminded that God, who loves all creation, has led HKBP to not only serve ourselves, but the entire world. This includes serving our fellow church members, our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, our brothers and sisters who may be less fortunate, our brothers and sisters who are differently abled, our brothers and sisters who are not only men but also women, who are not only parents but also youth and children, who are married and unmarried, who have children and who do not, even those who do not share our faith, and all of God's other creatures. We accomplish all of this in the name of the Triune God."[76]

Although the achievements that HKBP is aiming for - based on what the HKBP Ephorus mentioned - are quite broad and do not specifically mention interfaith encounters as the main target, but on several other occasions, the Ephorus mentioned this issue. For example, on the sermon of the New Year thanksgiving service of the HKBP Pastors' Meeting, on 6th January 2024, at the HKBP Theological Seminary, Pematangsiantar, "HKBP's aim for 2024 is clear: the church must move and serve all people and creatures, not just itself. HKBP, as Asia's largest church, is ready to achieve independence by establishing a service plan outside of itself, because the zending is not just when people are without religion, but also to provide

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[74] HKBP, *Buku Panduan*, 13-14.
[75] Ephorus is the title of a bishop in HKBP
[76] Kantor Pusat HKBP, "Khotbah Tahun Baru, 1 Januari 2024", *Almanak HKBP*, (Pematangsiantar: Percetakan HKBP, 2024), 44-45.

comprehensive service to all parts of humanity and environment, so that God's creation experiences his grace and love."[77]

Furthermore, when the Ephorus visited a gathering of theological Leaders in Bali in 2022, one of the most important and intriguing debates seen by the church was the discovery of many distinct theological beliefs that were quite discriminatory. So, the individuals volunteered to be studied and looked for universal similarities. Humans and religions are no longer formed for their own benefit. He said: "In order to work towards a better world, we must all agree on good values. If there are conflicting theological ideas, we need to come up with fresh perspectives that foster harmony and prosperity for all. If we are successful in doing so, we will have a powerful moral influence on the world to apply religious values in the dynamics of the world towards common welfare and all for different human beings."[78]

3.3 Pancasila and Religions in Indonesia

The basis of the Indonesian state (constitution) is called Pancasila, and it is made up of the words "*panca*" which means five, and "*sila*" which means basic. Pancasila literally means "the basic consisting of five elements."[79] Pancasila became the foundation of the state, uniting the diverse Indonesian nation. Each idea of Pancasila influences how people live their lives. Pancasila preserves the diversity that is always connected with multiculturalism, which includes ideas, viewpoints, policies, disclosures, and acts by a country's people, while also maintaining the spirit of development for the same nation.[80]

Pancasila is one of the aspects to take into account while discussing the Indonesian perspective on religious theology. In 1945, Indonesia's founding fathers adopted the Pancasila philosophy, to encompass all idea: monotheistic faith, civil humanism, nationalism, democracy, and social

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[77] The full sermon can be found in this link of video https://youtu.be/Z2AeiJVTQJk?si=2qy5CdGK9eEx-kzY

[78] https://www.gerejani.com/content/dirjen-bimas-kristen-ketum-pgi-dan-ephorus-hkbp-hadiri-forum-religion-20-r20-jelang-ktt-g20, accessed 15th May 2024.

[79] One of the common views among Indonesians is that Pancasila is not a foreign value that is applied to the lives of Indonesians, but rather Pancasila is a reflection of the centuries-long cultural journey and character of the Indonesian people. Toni Nasution, *Pendidikan Pancasila*, ed. Parida Harahap, and Ardi H. Hasibuan, (Medan: Merdeka Kreasi Group, 2022), 41.

[80] Icha Dwi Listari, "Pancasila and Religion", in *Journal of Etika Demokrasi*, Vol. 8, (2023), 334-335. DOI: 10.26618/jed.v8i3.10237

justice. That is why, in Indonesia, each religion and its teachings must adhere to Pancasila's monotheistic concept, and they should state their case for recognition in formal documents.[81]

Figure 3: Pancasila

Pendidikan Pancasila untuk Perguruan Tinggi, Kementerian Riset, Teknologi dan Pendidikan Tinggi Republik Indonesia (Pancasila Education for Higher Education, Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia), 2016, 11.

In the efforts to solve the problems of diversity, Indonesians became committed to one common understanding on the nature of the nation, that is the Pancasila (Five Basic Principles) as formulated in the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution, accepted as the foundation of the new state. The five principles (*sila*) are:[82]

1. *Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa* (Belief in the one and only God)
2. Kemanusiaan yang adil dan beradab (Just and civilized humanity)
3. *Persatuan Indonesia* (The unity of Indonesia)

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[81] Muhammad Ali, "Religious Difference and the Common Good: Reflection on Toleration and Participation in Contemporary America and Indonesia", in *Ilmu Ushuluddin,* 9, (2022), 5, 10.

[82] John Titaley, "The Pancasila of Indonesia: A Lost Ideal?", in *Faith and Ethnicity*, (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 38.

4. *Kerakyatan yang dipimpin oleh hikmat kebijaksanaan dalam permusyawaratan/ perwakilan* (Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations among representatives)

5. *Keadilan sosial bagi seluruh rakyat Indonesia* (Social justice for all the people of Indonesia)

However, history reveals that the Indonesian people had to endure a protracted fight to create Pancasila as the foundation of the state. Since Indonesian independence in 1945, many Islamic politicians have fought to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia. They have criticized the first *sila* of "belief in the one and only God" and attempted to add a sentence after stating "with the obligation to implement Islamic law for adherents."[83] However, many individuals objected to the addition of this line, claiming that it would bring turmoil. Finally, after much struggle and debate, the additional sentence was revoked on the basis that "we should not be divided as a nation," according to Hatta, Indonesia's first vice president.[84]

Pancasila is the most ideal foundation for Indonesia for a number of reasons, including: 1.) Pancasila is a meeting point for all groups and streams in the Indonesian country, ensuring that no group is disadvantaged by adhering to its separating ideas. 2.) The fourth principle of Pancasila emphasizes the importance of people's discussion in solving state problems. 3.) Pancasila emphasizes that the state is for everyone, not for just a specific group, nor only for the largest group of portion of population.[85]

In her study Pancasila and Religion (2023), Icha Dwi Listari of the State University of Malang's Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities asserts there are at least two types of interactions between religion and Pancasila in Indonesia. First, Pancasila and religions can coexist in a mutually beneficial way, with religion improving the moral standing of the country and Pancasila providing a guarantee for the safety and serenity of religious practice and daily life.

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[83] Aritonang, *Sejarah Perjumpaan*, 241-242.

[84] But behind this agreement, the Islamic group accepted the decision for two reasons: 1.) The Islamic organization emphasized the significance of national unity, particularly in the context of the newly constituted Indonesian state, and this first *sila* does not contradict the meaning of Tawhid (the oneness of God) in Islam, and 2.) The Islamic faction intended to win a general election held six months after the Proclamation due to Indonesia's primarily Muslim population. This scenario was aggravated by Soekarno's own vow, "Later, in a more peaceful environment, we can create a more full and flawless Constitution." The Muslim community hung onto this promise, and it was repeatedly asked to be fulfilled in the years that followed, and claimed that the Jakarta Charter (including the additional sentence of the *sila*) was never cancelled. Aritonang, *Sejarah Perjumpaan*, 254-255.

[85] Aritonang, *Sejarah Perjumpaan*, 312.

An further relationship is that Pancasila, which already contains admirable principles that every Indonesian citizen must uphold in order to create a wealthy, peaceful, just, and equitable society, regulates all aspects of national life.[86]

Nevertheless according to Listari, Pancasila was only viewed through a Muslim lens. She indicated that Pancasila's positive laws are essentially in line with Islamic teachings, and by fostering civil society and using cultural channels, it is hoped that eventually, positive laws that embody Islam will be accepted by both Islamic society and non-Muslims.[87] Such claims bring back divisions that reinforce the impression of Christianity versus Islam. Instead, I agree more with Olaf Schumann who mentions that the values discussed in Pancasila are not that different from the teachings of every religion, he mentioned Judaism, Christianity and Islam. I am aware of the dangers of this statement which might lead us to conclude that all religions are the same or what is better known as pluralism, but at this point what is meant is a sense of inclusivism, taking into account people who are outside the group. The topic of pluralism and some of its flaws so it cannot simply be used as the solution for Christian-Muslim relationship in Indonesia will be discussed further in the next chapter.[88] It implies that the state is not allowed to enforce a specific religious belief or practice. It appears that Indonesian Christians as a whole agreed with Schumann's viewpoint until the early 21st century. For this reason, Christians have never accepted that the state should assume the duties of [religious] communities or govern them through laws and regulations.[89]

Conclusion

Based on this discussion of Pancasila and theological perspectives from Indonesian religions, I can conclude that a solution for peace in the midst of diversity in Indonesia, has been attempted for a long time, and Pancasila is one of the result. However, Pancasila itself has conflicts since its inception. Thus, the way that Christianity and Islam have interacted over the course of several centuries has greatly influenced how they interact now. Conflict and

[86] Listari, Pancasila and Religion, 338.
[87] Listari, Pancasila and Religion, 338.
[88] I am aware of the dangers of this statement which might lead us to conclude that all religions are the same or what is better known as pluralism, but at this point what is meant is a sense of inclusivism, taking into account people who are outside the group. The topic of pluralism will be discussed further in the next chapter. Olaf Schumann, "Kehidupan Bersama Umat Kristiani dan Umat Muslim di Indonesia pada Masa Depan" in *Meretas Jalan Teologi Agama-Agama di Indonesia*, (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1999), 92-93.
[89] Aritonang, *Sejarah Perjumpaan*, 256-257.

avoidance (I discussed this in chapter 2), are the two most common attitudes in this interaction, as evidenced by a few instances that occurred in Indonesia. Then, Pancasila as a broader framework also shaped how HKBP perceives Islam and responds to it in encounters. Even though HKBP has little idea of its relationship with other religions, particularly Islam it can be seen that there are efforts on both the part of HKBP and Islam to achieve a peaceful life in Indonesia. So, the question now is the extent to which these efforts has been made by both the Christian side (HKBP) and Islam to develop a partnership that seeks for peace in coexistence while being faithful to Christ, this will be discussed in the next chapter.

4. COMMON GOOD VS WITNESS THROUGH THE LENS OF POLARIZATION

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will look into the efforts by both Christians and Muslims in Indonesia for their relationships through the lens of polarization. Two common efforts are: striving for the peaceful coexistence with common good as the ground, and witnessing Christ but at the risk of being isolated from the surrounding, particularly Muslim neighbours. Hence I will first discuss about polarization in general and in Indonesia which is developing in many sectors, and I will focused on politics, since because it is this field that is most susceptible to polarization. Then I will look to the impact of polarization in religion, to show that in Indonesia many people use the mindset that they can only choose between being white or black, witnessing their faith, or living peacefully with people of different religions, and there is nothing in between.

4.2 Polarization in Indonesia

Although interreligious harmony has been pursued, there are current challenges, such as social conflict and religious polarization, that could threaten this harmony.[90] In recent years in Indonesia there are many coda to what many commentators saw as years of growing polarization. Soderborg and Burhanuddin Muhtadi did a research and found that there are much resentment in Indonesia, which can be the fuel for polarization.[91]

Polarization as a social phenomenon can be seen all over the world through the tendencies of us-versus-them thinking. From politics to economics, from religion to social issues. Prejudices about ethnicity, race, religion, culture, gender, sexual orientation, and class contribute to polarization. Fearful of losing what is valued, one group begins to question another group's moral legitimacy, even demonizing this group as the source of imagined or genuine threats. Polarization is more than merely diversity, disagreement, or holding opposing viewpoints; it is frequently motivated by a desire for a strong and stable (group) identity that is formed as being in opposition to the (attributed) identity of the other group. This phenomenon, caused by a fear

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[90] Artariah, "Strategi Tokoh Agama dalam Membangun Kerukunan Antarumat Beragama di Indonesia", in *Jurnal Insan Pendidikan dan Sosial Humaniora*, Vol.2, (2024), 187.
[91] Seth Soderborg and Burhanuddin Muhtadi, "Resentment and Polarization in Indonesia", in *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 23, (2023), 439-467.

of difference, transformed into us versus them thinking, and prevents any kind of compromise and discourage the willingness to communicate.[92]

In Indonesia there are several responses to what many critics viewed as years of growing polarization. One of the research conducted by Soderborg and Burhanuddin Muhtadi conducted that polarization in Indonesia might be fuelled by much of resentment.[93] Religious polarisation and its impact can be clearly seen in politics or the election of regional and state leaders in Indonesia. For instance, Colm Fox, a professor of political science, attempts to show how polarisation works in election campaign in Indonesia by examining the religious appeals and polarisation that occurred during gubernatorial elections from 2017 to 2020.[94]

One of the examples he gives is the 2017 DKI Jakarta Gubernatorial Campaign. Basuki 'Ahok'Tjahaya Purnama delivered a speech at a community center on an island near Jakarta. Ahok made a statement that resulted his political demise and raise significant concerns about Indonesia's tolerance for minorities. Ahok advised the audience not to be misled by his opponents, who were exploiting a Qur'anic verse to persuade them to vote against him, as he attempted to be the first Christian Chinese to win the Jakarta governorship. The verse in question is al Maidah 51 which is commonly understood to ban Muslims from voting non-Muslim politicians. As for the contents of the verse referred to by Ahok is:

بَعْضٍ ۗ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّهُمْ مِّنْكُمْ فَاِنَّهٗ مِنْهُمْ ۗ اِنَّ اللهَ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ

51. O you who believe! Do not take the Jews and Christians as your friends; they protect one another. Whoever among you takes them as friends, then indeed he is one of them. Indeed, Allah does not guide the wrongdoers.[95]

The next day, 30-seconds clip taken from Ahok's hour-long speech was posted on YouTube. The video went viral, and conservative Muslim groups said Ahok had insulted the Qur'an and committed blasphemy. Following the accusations there were massive demonstrations, a

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[92] Peter Vos, "Introduction", in *The Calling of the Church in Times of Polarization,* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 1.

[93] Soderborg and Muhtadi, Resentment, 439-467.

[94] Colm A. Fox, "Religious Polarization in Indonesia", in *Bonding, Bridging, and Bypassing: Understanding Ethnic Politics in Diverse Societies*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), 197-223. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780197743959.003.0009

[95] Al-Qur'an Surat Al-Ma'idah Ayat ke-51 | Liputan6.com access: 18th June 2024

contentious election campaign, and a criminal trial. Ahok was found guilty of blasphemy and inciting violence seven and a half months after that, he earned a two-year prison sentence.[96]

This appears as the Islamist mobilization against Ahok as evidence of a conservative turn, a rise in religious intolerance, and a dangerous precedent for the use of Islam in election campaigns. International reports echoed these concerns and often framed the episode as a reflection of weakening democracy and rising religious intolerance in Indonesia. Fox sees this as a contentious environment polarising voters and shifting the focus from programmatic reforms to religion.[97]

Figure 4: Sea of People Demonstrate Against Ahok

Source: https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/puluhan-ribu-berdemonstrasi-menentang-gubernur-jakarta/3620159.html

Another example is provided by Deasy Simandjuntak, an associate professor of political science and political snthropology. In April 2019, Indonesia held the world's largest one-day election, with 193 million voters, 810,000 voting sites spread across cities and villages. A rigid polarization existed throughout the presidential election campaign, people focused their attention primarily on the race between the two presidential candidates: incumbent President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo and former General Prabowo Subianto.[98] For many, the political schism between the two candidates was over religious issues: Jokowi was viewed as a symbol of "pluralism" and religious tolerance due to the "ideology" of the parties that supported him, which were largely nationalist rather than religious. In contrast, Prabowo's backing from an Islamist-inspired party and Islamic conservative groups made him a symbol of their efforts to

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[96] Fox, Religious Polarization, 197-198, 200.
[97] Fox, Religious Polarization, 198-199.
[98] Such polarization made the election more interesting to voters, resulting in an 81% turnout, the highest in the post-authoritarian history.

establish a more Islamic Indonesian polity, even though Prabowo himself confessed that he lacked Islamic credentials. As a result, "religious" voting was unavoidable: according to exit polls, 97% of non-Muslim voters supported Jokowi.[99]

Seth Soderborg, a comparative politics researcher, and Burhanuddin Muhtadi, a political science professor, argued that resentments that move through many routes foster polarization in Indonesia. The channels of this resentment could be ethnically Chinese Indonesians, non-Muslim minorities, Java, or regional.[100] This form of polarization fuel by resentment exists among Indonesians, dividing the world into "us" and "them," with the "we" being inherently good and the "they" not. This is in line with Bart Brandsma's argument, a philosopher, trainer, and consultant, that polarization is mostly a "gut feeling" dynamic, rather than a logical argument. This is founded on three key laws of polarization: first, it is a dynamic that is motivated by a mental idea. By assigning frameworks to the identities of others, someone can concurrently define themselves. Second, polarization requires fuel to continue, which consists of one-liner generalizations about other people's identities. Third, polarization is sometimes portrayed as a disagreement over facts, but it is rooted in emotions and sentiments.[101]

After discussing what polarization is and how it occurs in Indonesia, particularly in the political sphere, I will consider the impact of this polarization on religion, specifically the relationship between Christianity and Islam.

4.2.1 Polarization and its impacts on interreligious encounter

To demonstrate the impact of this polarization in the religious realm, I shall address the Christian-Muslim conflict in Ambon-Maluku, which I discussed in chapter 2. The Ambon-Maluku conflict, which had been lasting since 1999, came to a symbolic end on February 12, 2002, with the Malino II agreement. The Malino[102] II agreement brought together Muslim and Christian religious leaders to seek a peaceful resolution. However, there are still challenges

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[99] Deasy Simanjuntak, "Challenges to Indonesia's Democracy: Beyond Religious Polarization", in *Asia- Pacific Research Forum,* No. 69 (2021), 10-11.

[100] Soderborg and Muhtadi, "Resentment, 439-449.

[101] Brandsma, *Polarisation*, 17-24.

[102] Malino, located in the province of South Sulawesi, a natural tourist site with outstanding appeal. There is a tourism forest near Malino, consisting of large pine trees that line the hills and valleys. Anju Nofarof Hasudungan, "Muslim and Christian Relations in the Field of Education after the Ambon-Maluku Conflict (The Biggest Religious Conflict in Indonesia)", in *Journal of Education, Society, and Multiculturalism,* (2021), 41.

that may spark similar clashes in the future. Specifically, the relationship between Maluku Muslims and Christians has been damaged. In fact, challenge of maintaining peace must continue in the midst of the Maluku people's polarization as a result of identity politics and populism. The recent Ambon-Maluku battle has destroyed connections between citizens with different religious backgrounds, especially Islam and Christianity. This also can be seen in religious segregation that has occurred in the city of Ambon.[103] People of different religions choose to live in separate neighborhoods.[104] This shows that Christians and Muslims opt to avoid engagement for various reasons, including maintaining peace or avoiding conflict.

Other solutions offered to achieve peace in this conflicted area, Ambon-Maluku is *Pela Gandong*. Pela existed well before the emergence of monotheistic faiths. In Pela, a bilateral blood pact was formed following a bloody conflict between villages over insufficient resources. A Pela ritual established the covenant's regulations, which were also applied to subsequent generations. One of the most crucial rules in Pela was to remain loyal to one another during both good and bad times. During the conflict in 1999, numerous Pela villages were pitted against one another. Then the Malino peace agreement of 2002 concluded that honoring the Pela may have prevented civil strife, that provocateurs used religion to incite Christians against Muslims. Both Muslims and Christians desired a reappraisal of Pela.[105]

This is an attempt to bring peace to conflict zones, but it can become a problem if the witness to Christ is no longer taken into account in the interaction between Christianity and Islam. This can be seen from the statement of Anju N. Hasudungan, who did research in numerous junior high schools in Ambon City, stated that teaching Pela to students is crucial for building Christian- Muslim peace in Ambon-Maluku. He further remarked that the essence of Pela is a Maluku-based fraternity regardless concern of religions, including Islam and Christianity.[106] The problem is not with the notion or essence of Pela, but with the lack of emphasis on the significance of maintaining one's identity as a specific religion even when striving for peace for living together. The absence of conflict does not necessarily imply peace. Peace should be

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[103] Hasudungan, Muslim and Christian Relations, 41.
[104] David Octavianus Roos, "Segregasi Sosial Pascakonflik 1999 di Kota Ambon", in *Jurnal Inovasi Penelitian,* 2, (2021), 79-82.
[105] Simon Ririhena, "The Pela as a Model for Inclusive Peacebuilding", in *Religiously Exclusive, Socially Inclusive? A Religious Response,* ed. Bernhard Reitsma, and Erika van Nes-Visscher, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023), 232
[106] Hasudungan, Muslim and Christian Relations, 40-51.

regarded in a broader, more active sense. For instance, when people from different religious can communicate freely and without fear or discomfort. [107]

4.3 HKBP and Polarization

HKBP, one of Indonesia's Christian communities, has likewise seen the effects of polarization. I will mention two of them. *First*, it is relevant to the 2019 general election, as I said in point 4.2. Sabarmalumma Berutu, Ibrahim, and Ranto did research on one of the HKBP congregations in the province of Bangka Belitung Islands, namely HKBP Pangkalpinang. An evident type of polarization is present in terms of political preferences and support. In HKBP Pangkalpinang it was found that the polarization of Batak ethnic support in the church in is divided into three forms: choosing ethnic Batak candidates who adhere to Christianity, choosing non-Batak candidates who adhere to Christianity, and choosing non-Batak and non-Christian candidates. It appears that the Batak community forms a network in which each majority clan aspires to become a leader. This network is utilized as a political tactic to ensure that one clan or ethnicity becomes a leader or a winner in political contestation. Berutu and others see this as one of the Batak community's traits, specifically an exclusive attitudes. This refers to a group that creates bonds with the intention of building relationships for 'us' only, and not for others outside "us".[108]

Second, related to conflicts experienced by HKBP congregations. For instance, conflict over the establishment of the church building of HKBP Ciketing Asem. The polarizing effect of this conflict is that when the root cause of the problem is perceived to be the influx of migrants that integrating local culture, religion, and new values into the community. Initially, there was barely trouble, but this became an issue when the Christian community growing rapidly.[109] Here, there appears to be a 'we' versus 'them' ideology. Locals begin to regard the rising Christian community as something that contradicts with their identity. This conflict was eventually resolved with the construction of the HKBP church building but in a replacement

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[107] Ahmad Saefudin and Fathur Rohman, "Peacefull Theology of Islam, Hindu, and Christian Religion in Plajan Pakis Aji Jepara", in *Al-Qalam*, 25, (2019), 393-402.
[108] Sabarmaluma Berutu, Ibrahim, and Ranto, "Preferensi Politik Etnis Batak Gereja HKBP Pangkalpinang pada Pemilihan DPRD Provinsi Bangka Belitung 2019", in *Scripta: Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa*, Vol. 2, (2020), 268-270. doi:10.33019/scripta.v2i2.59
[109] Jamaludin, Konflik dan Integrasi, 236-237.

location agreed by the HKBP congregation.[110] This is also likely to become a problem in the future, as the HKBP congregation prefers to "avoid" interactions with Muslims in the area, as a form of conflict avoidance. This could be an initial stage of further polarization, as the HKBP congregation and the Muslims in the neighborhood will eventually be divided into two opposed camps, "us" here and "them" there.

4.4 Christians-Muslims Relation in Indonesia in Times of Polarization

Therefore, what efforts have been made by both Muslims and Christians in Indonesia to live in harmony while maintain their own identity in times of polarization? I will divide it into two parts from the perspective of Christians: *first*, with the principle of "common good", but at the risk of undermining the identity of faith or witness to Christ and *second* "witnessing Christ" with the risk of loss of harmony or peaceful co-existence with Muslims, or worse, with the possibility of persecution.

4.4.1 Common good

Common good is usually considered more in Islamic-Christian relations than witnessing to Christ. This is one of the biggest motivations for people with different religious backgrounds in Indonesia to work together. I mentioned in chapter 1 "A Common Word Between Us and You", an open letter by 138 leading Muslims to the leaders of the Christian churches and denominations.[111] This letter has certainly had an effect on Christian-Muslim relations in Indonesia. For example, in Saifurrahman's "Muslim and Christian Understanding: Theory And Application Of 'A Common Word". He put forward examples of practices that can be used to build Christian-Islamic relations include: 1. Working together to protect the environment, which has become a global concern; 2. Working together to combat drugs that endanger youth; and 3. Working together to fortify the morality of the nation's generation against corruption which has become a plague that causes sorrow in society. 4. Work together to promote the economic benefits of religious tourism; 5. Work together to raise health awareness; 6. Work together to end the cycle of poverty and unemployment while also combating illiteracy and social injustice. And many more other actions that religious leaders and the general public can

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[110] https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita_indonesia/2010/12/101229_hkbp_ciketing access 5 June 2024.
[111] Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad of Jordan, On "A Common Word", 3.

take. The ultimate goal is to bring together Islam and Christianity. Therefore, there is a need for reciprocal openness to one another. [112]

However, I do not agree that the foundation of "common good" and the solution of being more open to one another is enough to nurture relations between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia. Such approach for being more open means reading 'A Common Word' without offering any criticisms. This risks emphasizing a specific religion's superiority (in this case, Islam's inclusive supremacy, as the Islamic Party initiated this letter). Jon Hoover, an assistant professor of Islamic studies at the Near East School of Theology in Beirut argues, 'A Common Word' aimed to encourage a more constructive and open Islamic discourse while remaining mainstream and orthodox. A Common Word speaks to Christians in language they can understand, but the traditional doctrine of Islam's inclusive supremacy remains, albeit in a different form that allows for a less polemical approach to Christian doctrines.[113]

Furthermore, relationships based on the 'common good' undermine Christian identity, and witnessing Christ in a varied world becomes imprecise and less considered. Hoover believes that 'A Common Word' does not necessarily conclude that Christianity is wrong insofar as it teaches concepts that Islam does not. However, the document shows little evidence of being able to accept fundamental differences between the two religions. On this reading, A Common Word does not have to condemn Christian teachings like God's trinity as incorrect. This ideology says that Islam includes everything true and essential in previously revealed religions.[114]

Another reason to dispute these 'common good' motivations for building relationships is the possibility that these are just a mask for each other, masking the ignorance of each other. As stated by Ahmad Akam an Indonesian researcher of interreligious study, through the religious education in Indonesia particularly in high school and university levels it show there is no sense of engaging and understanding between these two religions. The relationship between Muslims and Christians are good only in the level of social daily routines and secular activities. Muslims and Christians consider each other's religion as alien and they have nothing in common at all. While Islamic and Christian faiths have certain similarities - this is what 'A Common Word

[112] Saifurrahman, "Muslim and Christian Understanding: Theory and Application of 'A Common Word'", in *Tasámuh*, 13, (2016), 177-178.
[113] Hoover, A Common Word, 52.
[114] Hoover, A Common Word, 73-74.

refers to, and seeks to be the basis for the common good- there are also important differences. Ignoring beliefs held by others might lead to further bitterness. While they share a living space and spend time together, discussing religion is a sensitive topic that should be avoided whenever possible. They avoid discussing their diverse religious beliefs. This mindset can be helpful in the short term but not in the long term connection between them. This can be the sign of infidelity and suppressed fanaticism, similar to a radioactive buried under the sea that could explode with minor friction. Hidden animosity and suspicion can lead to tension and conflict between Muslims and Christians.[115]

Nonetheless, striving for the common good appears to be disregarding each religion's unique identity. For example, Muhammad Ali, an Indonesian associate professor of Islamic studies, argues that religious identity is insufficient for achieving the common good.[116] I agree to a certain extent. He uses examples, in America, Muslim minorities believe they must conform to majoritarian cultures, and in Indonesia, the Christian Trinitarian doctrine must be adjusted to the monotheistic principle of the State's Philosophy Pancasila.[117] However, it becomes problematic when Christianity or other religions are forced to conceal their religious beliefs in order to achieve peaceful coexistence. Aside from that, he poses crucial question: do people work together despite their differences, or do they bond not despite, but because of differences?[118]

Despite the potential flaws of this motive, the common good has thus far succeeded in uniting many Christians and Muslims in joint efforts to improve ties. Collaborative efforts include informal conversations, pro-peace theology, and the activity of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) supported a by various religious groups.[119]

4.4.2 Witnessing Christ

Compared to the previous attitude, this attitude, witnessing Christ does not seem to attract many Christians in their relationship with Muslims. Since in the context of Indonesia, Christians and Muslims face different situation regarding showing their religious character or witness. While

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[115] Ahmad Hakam, "Harmonious 'Coexsitence and Mutual Ignorance: Exclusivity in Religious Education in Indonesia", in *Jurnal Studi Alquran*, (2011), 1-6.
[116] Muhammad Ali, Religious Difference, 3.
[117] Ali, Religious Difference, 9-10.
[118] Ali, Religious Difference, 11.
[119] Amos Sukamto, "Muslim-Christian Relations and Collaborative Efforts to Build Indonesia", in *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, 46, (2022), 534.

Muslim can be quite confident, Christians should reflect more before showing their witness. This could be one of the reasons why Christians see Muslims in Indonesia as "unreached people", that if they try to give witness among Muslims it could possibly lead them to persecution.[120] Lew Belcourt, a pastor from Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Filipina, in his paper "Overcoming Persecution as a Barrier to Christian Witness to Muslims in Indonesia" shows that the barrier for witnessing Christ is persecution, and gives impression that if Christians want to witness Christ, they have to be prepared for persecution.

This could become a dangerous pattern, when this kind of idea emerged and taken for granted: "Christians may face persecution from family members, but Jesus will identify those who remain true to the Father. Believers who remain faithful to the Father. Keep going even when things are tough."[121] and compounded by the mindset that Christianity is always better than other religions. This resonates the polarization worldview in which 'we' are good and 'them' are bad, and they must be reached right away.

The issue starts when Christians want to share their beliefs, but they often appear superior and dismiss other religions as false. This can be found in early Christian figures like Martin Luther. Regarding other religion, Luther distinguished between true and false religion. False religion is motivated by evil. Luther classified Jews and Turks (as Muslims were known at the time) as God's enemies. Then, Luther became much more anti-Muslim and felt military action as required. He also refers to Muslims as heretics and Satan worshippers since they portray Jesus as a mere human being, born of a virgin, and nothing more than a decent prophet. Luther found Islam to be guilty of moralism and ethical human behavior based on human efforts to fulfil all legal requirements and hope for redemption. This prompted Luther to categorize Jews, Muslims, and Roman Christians as seeking a fake religious redemption based on human accomplishments. Only through faith can redemption take place. This distinguishes Christianity among other religions. [122]

Examples of this attitude are more likely to be found in Indonesia's predominantly Christian areas than in Muslim areas. For example, the Poso and Ambon riots (1999–2011). According

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[120] Lew Belcourt, "Overcoming Persecution as a Barrier to Christian Witness to Muslims in Indonesia", in *AJPS*, 26, (2023), 105-138.
[121] Belcourt, Overcoming Persecution, 121.
[122] W. M. Shaw, "Theology of Religions in Martin Luther", in Perspectives on Theology of Religions, *HTS Theological Studies/ Teologiese Studies*, 12, (2017), 26-32. Doi: 10.4102/hts.v73i6.4882

to research, these acts were carried out with the intention of defending the Christian faith.[123] The war in Maluku is generally depicted as a long-standing hostility between Muslims and Christians, but the truth is more complex. During more than 300 years of Dutch colonization, Maluku society was separated by religion, geography, and social status. During Dutch colonialism, Christians gained access to school and political offices, while Muslims dominated trade and business. Muslims became the majority of traders and businesspeople. The heat was increased by the high number of Muslim migrants from Bugis, Buton, and Makassar. The Ambonese, who were largely Christian, desired to 'protect' their religion and were hostile towards anyone who practiced another religion.[124] This exemplifies superiority attitude and polarization at the same time by showing the division of "us "against "them".

Conclusion

Polarization has a significant impact on Christian-Muslim relations in Indonesia, as evidenced by the tendency towards us-versus-them attitude. Fearful of losing what is valuable, one group begins to question another group's moral legitimacy, even demonizing the latter as the source of imagined or real threats. The example of Ahok's case in the Jakarta governor election was particularly effective in demonstrating religious polarization in Indonesia, which led to political outcomes. HKBP is also susceptible to the effects of polarization. Although the church officially portrays itself as inclusive and open to others, one case study from HKBP Pangkalpinang demonstrates that the polarization of Batak ethnic support in the church may be classified into three types: choosing ethnic Batak candidates who adhere to Christianity, choosing non-Batak candidates who adhere to Christianity, and choosing non-Batak and non-Christian candidates. It appears that the Batak community has formed a network in which each majority clan strives to be a leader. Aside from that, the efforts to improve Christian-Muslim relations, it appears that peaceful coexistence while encouraging Christians to keep their faith or witness to Christ has yet to be achieved simultaneously. Currently, Christians in Indonesia must choose between these two goals. If Christians desire to live peacefully, their witness to Christ should be vague in order to avoid offending Muslims. On the other hand, when

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[123] Daniel Fajat Panutun, and Eunike Paramita, "Hubungan Pembelajaran Al-Kitab Terhadap Nilai-Nilai Hidup Berbangsa dalam Pemuridan Kontekstual (Kelompok Tumbuh Bersama Kontekstual), in *Jurnal Gamaliel: Teologi Praktika*, Vol. 1, (2019), 105.
[124] Debora Sanur Lindawaty, "Konflik Ambon: Kajian terhadap Beberapa Akar Permasalahan dan Solusinya", in *Jurnal Politica*, Vol. 2, (2011), 280-281. Doi: 10.22212/jp.v2i2.295

Christians witness Christ, they have a superior attitude towards others, which can lead to conflict. So, what can the Christian community in Indonesia do to achieve these two goals? I will discuss this in the next chapter using the concept of "in between".

5. THEOLOGICAL-MISSIOLOGICAL MODEL FOR THE ENCOUNTER OF HKBP AND ISLAM IN A POLARIZED ENVIRONMENT

5.1 Introduction

After exploring the reality of polarization in Indonesia in the preceding chapter, in this chapter, I will discuss several examples of theological-missiological models that the HKBP church might apply in its interactions with Muslims. I will discuss several models highlighted by authors such as Lesslie Newbigin, and Marianne Moyaert, and elaborate on them with Martin Buber's concept of "the between". I chose Marianne Moyaert because she is one of the experts in Interreligious dialogue studies and uses a hermeneutical approach to openness with others. As for Lesslie Newbgin, I chose him because he was one of the theologians who interacted with the theology of religions wi*thou*t settling with the pluralist position, and at the same time still considered the Christian mission aspect of this interfaith encounter. Since I indicated that one of the reasons I chose Newbigin was that he did not hold the pluralist view, I will begin by explaining my critique of the pluralist model, and how a mere pluralist approach cannot be the solution in Christian-Muslim relations in Indonesia. Second, I will discuss briefly "the between" concept by Martin Buber, a philosopher of dialogue, who elaborated on the "middle position" offered by Brandsma. In Bradsma's model on the dynamics of polarization, the key to dealing with polarization is in the so called "middle position" or "the middle of the field, it is the place where people can deprive polarization of its fuel. "The middle" is the space between the two opposite poles of polarization, where the silent majority of people can be found, under pressure to join either side. However, what I mean by the between space here is not a place where Christians choose to stay silent. This will be the third part where I offer models where Christians will be able to be open towards others and being faithful at the same time in in the polarized context of Indonesia.

5.2 Typology in Indonesia and the Critique

The issue of interreligious relationships in Indonesia has been widely discussed by many figures. However, if the solution offered is based on the typology I have briefly described in the previous chapter, I would argue that it is insuficience. First, *exclusivism* is insufficient for the Indonesian context because, while not necessarily making its adherents exclusive, its claims that there is only one ultimate truth, in this context is usually followed by the principle and

desire to take action against "possible errors" in other religious traditions. According to a study conducted by Qolbi M. A. Sukmayadi, Sardin, and Nindita F. Utami that contended that religious exclusivism is one of the key reasons for intolerance which is one of the forms of conflict and discrimination of religious communities that has historically manifested itself in the forms of prohibition, attack, and coercion against minorities.[125]

Second, for inclusivism, the main problem is that what is conceptualized is very difficult to actually implement in Indonesia. For instance, a research conducted by H. Husni and H. Bisri shows that among teachers who educate people in Indonesia, there are prospective inclusive teachers reject and do not agree with views that other sects, or those who differ in their worship practices. Only a small proportion of his respondents can be categorized as inclusivist.[126] This echoes the doubts towards inclusivism expressed by Amos Yong, a professor of theology and missiology, that the challenge for inclusivists is balancing religious discernment with a realistic outlook.[127]

 Unfortunately, there are many who assume that pluralism is the best way to deal with this issue. In Indonesia, the understanding that developed about pluralism leads to the idea that all religions are the same, and even syncretism. Due to that, *Majelis Ulama Indoesia* (MUI-Indonesian Ulema Council) issued a fatwa forbidding the idea of pluralism for Muslims in Indonesia.[128]

[125] Qolbi M. A. Sukmayadi, Sadrin, and Nindita, F. Utami, "Generasi Z dalam Komunitas Keagamaan: Potensi Intoleransi Beragama melalui Budaya Eksklusif dalam Memahami Agama", in *Jurnal Pemikiran Sosiologi*, Vol. 10, (2023), 1-34.
[126] H. Husni, and H. Bisri, "Inclusivism, and Exclusivism: Responses of Prospective Islamic Religious Teachers Towards Islamic Sects", in *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies,* 80, (2024). https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v80i1.9361
[127] Amos Yong, "Whither Theological Inclusivism? The Development and Critique of an Evangelical Theology of Religions", in *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 71, (1999), 346. https://dx.doi.org/10.1163/27725472-07104004
[128] As for the contents of the letter, MUI stated: Religious pluralism is an ideology which teaches that all religions are the same and that therefore the truth of each religion is relative; therefore, every religious adherent should not claim that only their own religion is true while other religions are wrong. Religious pluralism also teaches that all religious believers will enter and live side by side in heaven. Himpunan Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia No. 7/MUNAS VII/ MUI/ 11/ 2005 about Religious Pluralism, Liberalism, and Secularism. https://mui.or.id/storage/fatwa/5dbbd3ce3e7cd1dd777f068e7bf068c8-lampiran.pdf Access 21st June 2024.

Sure, there are also some Muslim writers in Indonesia support pluralism, as seen in the book "*Membela Kebebasan Beragama: Percakapan tentang Sekularisme, Liberalisme, dan Pluralisme* (Defending Religious Freedom: Conversations on Secularism, Liberalism, and Pluralism)" (2011), edited by Budhy Munawar-Rachman. One of the author of the book, Siti Musdah Mulia, a professor of Islamic Politic argues that pluralism emphasizes tolerance and mutual respect. Thus, pluralism does not aim to equal all religions. It is not synonymous with syncretistic religion, and it goes too far if interpreted as nihilism.[129] However, regardless of whether or not pluralism is forbidden in Indonesia by the MUI, I think that simply pluralism is not enough to build relationships between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia. I will use the perspectives of numerous authors to demonstrate that pluralism is not always a solution for interfaith relations, particularly in Indonesia, where Islam and Christianity are polarized, and the aim is for both community to have a good relationships and for Christians to witness for Christ.

5.2.1 Davin G'Costa

In Chapter 3, I indicated that there are many flaws in Alan Race's typology: exclusivism-inclusivism-pluralism. However, many pluralist authors continue to argue that pluralism is the best paradigm for explaining religious plurality. Furthermore, they claim that they are the only ones who do justice to the tension between identity and openness.[130] Among many critiques of pluralism, I will first use Gavin D'Costa, an emeritus professor of Catholic theology well known for his inter-religious dialogue study. D'Costa's critique is first of all about the logical impossibility of a pluralist view of religions.[131]

D'Costa argues pluralism, and inclusivism are only subtypes of exclusivism. There is no such thing as pluralism since all pluralists are dedicated to some sort of truth criteria, and anything that contradicts such criteria is barred from counting as truth (in doctrine and practice). Plurality functions inside the same logical framework as exclusivism, and it can never really declare the authentic autonomous worth of religious plurality since, like exclusivism, it can only do so via tradition-specific truth standards. If a pluralist asserts that they do not use such exclusive criteria, they will be unable to discern between any two claims of revelation or truth. Hence,

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[129] Siti Musdah Mulia, in *Membela Kebebasan Beragama: Percakapan tentang Sekularisme, Liberalisme, dan Pluralisme*, (Jakarta: Democracy Project, 2011), 1903.

[130] Marianne Moyaert, *Fragile Identities: Towards a Theology of Interreligious Hospitality*, (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2011), 85.

[131] Gavin D'Costa, "The Impossibility of a Pluralist View of Religions", in *Religious Studies*, 32 (1996), 223-232.

the real differences between those referred to as pluralists, inclusivists, and exclusivists are not, for example, whether a Muslim can achieve salvation in this life, or whether certain forms of loving one's neighbor should be valued, but rather whether they disagree on what is considered normative truth and how it operates. As a result, logically speaking, the pluralist is identical to the exclusivist, with the exception of the criteria used to determine what constitutes truth.[132]

5.2.2 Leslie Newbigin

Lesslie Newbigin made at least two statements about the pluralist perspective. The first comes from a sociological viewpoint on knowledge. According to Newbigin, a pluralist point of view emerged in a culture where the supermarket is the most common characteristic. A culture that elevated the independent person to the status of supreme reality, and is accustomed to the wide choice available on supermarket shelves, as well as the flexibility to select the preferred brands. One can adhere to one's preferred brand and sing its praises; nevertheless, insisting that everyone else pick the same brand is inappropriate. This leads to the second issue. Pluralism denies Jesus Christ's uniqueness. It shifted from a Christocentric to a theocentric view of reality, and the next move is defined as soteriocentric, focused on the shared search for salvation. According to Newbigin, even the name "God" implies exclusivity and prohibits various concepts of Transcendent Reality. But what exactly is meant by "salvation"? Hick explains the transition from self-centeredness to a focus on God or reality. However, Newbigin believes that reality cannot be recognized with a definite name, shape, picture, or story. It is unknowable, and each individual must create his or her idea of it. There is no objective reality that can confront the self and provide another core, as the physical person of Jesus does. There is just the ego and its yearning for salvation, which must be met by whichever form of the unknowable Transcendent the self prefers. Newbigin characterized this viewpoint as a shift toward the ego as the only centre. A "soteriocentric" viewpoint regards "reality" as the servant of the self and its wants. It rules out the notion that "reality" as personal might approach the self with a summons that needs an answer. It is a genuine product of the consumer society.[133]

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[132] D'Costa, The Impossibility of a Pluralist View, 225-226.

[133] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 168-169).

5.2.3 Marianne Moyaert

Marianne Moyaert has similar views, in her three key points of remark on pluralism. The first is that although pluralists claim to have a supraconfessional perspective, they are not sufficiently conscious that they, too, speak and write confessionally. They offer a message of salvation, asking people to embrace the pluralist understanding of religious plurality. Only those who have converted are eligible to participate in interreligious dialogues. Then she concludes that, from a comprehensible perspective, pluralism can be interpreted as exclusivist.[134] Second, Moyaert argues that pluralism fails to do justice to difference. Pluralists' presumption that all roads lead to the same redemption blinds them to the religious differences of others. Moreover, pluralism is a form of improper "paternalism". Pluralists assume that they understand religious traditions better than their believers do. And the fact that pluralism does not accept being contradicted by how religions conceive themselves promotes the pluralist disregard for interreligious differences.[135] Finally, Moyaert contends that pluralism fails to adequately account for the particular nature of faith commitments. This is based on an expressivist view of religion that reinforces the pluralist disregard for interreligious differences. In contrast to this theory, she argued that believers are in some ways linked to particular activities, rituals, symbols, etc. because God imprints himself in them. God leaves traces in the concrete elements, which believers discover and use to find God. People connect with God by identifying with the specific components in which God has manifested. The faith commitment with respect to God is a belonging to God, which is possible only if the believer understand the concrete element as the embodied of God. The pluralist viewpoint ignore this.[136]

Finally, I would argue that the pluralist viewpoint is insufficient for addressing Christian-Muslim relations in Indonesia. Apparently, religious pluralism tries to provide a solution in the sense that no religion is superior to another, it eliminates differences between religions and unifies the similarities that exist, but it also introduces new problems; religious pluralism poses a threat to religions rather than providing relief.[137]

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[134] Moyaert, *Fragile Identities*, 85.
[135] Moyaert, *Fragile Identities*, 119.
[136] Moyaert, *Fragile Identities*, 119-120.
[137] Monang Ranto Vaber Simamora, "The Dark Side of Religious Pluralism According to Alan Race's Theory.", in *Conference Series*. Vol. 4. No. 2. (2022), 278. https://doi.org/10.34306/conferenceseries.v4i2.934

5.3 The Between

Then, what can I offer as a solution to build the relationship between HKBP as a Christian Community and Muslim in Indonesia's polarized context? With a note that HKBP wants to build a peaceful relationship while maintaining its identity as a follower of Christ or a witness to Christ. I will use Martin Buber's concept, a philosopher from last century, of "the between," which argues that what exists between people is the underlying ontic reality of authentic relationship and discourse. The between is more than just the space between people; it further refers to a specific status or quality in this sphere. It is the place where actual encounters occur and true connections are made. Buber refers to the between as the coincidence of opposites.[138]

This concept of "the between" can be seen developed in Brandsma's approach. In his concept, the key to deal with polarization is in the so-called "middle position". This is where one can strip the fuel of polarization. Polarization is all about opposites, therefore "the middle" is the space between the two opposed poles of polarization, where the silent majority of people can be found, under pressure to join either side. Not black or white, but grey. The pushers are the persons that promote polarization, attempting to convert people into a "us" vs "them" mindset and lure them into their camp. If one can relieve some of the strain on the middle, there may be more space to work through the many concerns.[139]

However, what I mean by the between space here is not a place where Christians choose to remain silent, hide in the shadow of dread, and avoid encounter with others. The essence of life is encounter, and it is not something made by human, but it is grace. Even though the encounter is grace, building a relationship is different. It requires an action to be taken. [140] And the action someone can choose in an encounter are either the word *I-Thou*, or *I-It*. An action based on *I-It* words means the *it* is allow itself to be experienced, but it is not concerned, it contributes nothing to the other party. But the words *I- Thou* is something one needs to establish the world of relation.[141] This is the first thing we aim to acquire from Buber. Before someone define space "the between" in our relations with others, they need to understand how the lens view the position with others.

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[138] Bernhard Reitsma, "The Between: Leadership in Times of Polarization", in *Bridge-Building Leadership in a Polarizing World: Christian Perspective on Leadership and Social Ethics,* Vol 8, Ed. J. Barentsen, and C. Tulp, (Leuven: Peeters, 2024), 86-87.

[139] Brandsma, *Polarisation,* 87-89, 32-35.

[140] Martin Buber, *Ich und Du*, (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1999), 17. doi: 10.14315/9783641310561

[141] Buber, *Ich und Du*, 1, 11.

When someone encounters others in the lens of *I-Thou* there is the power of relationship. If I approach a human being as my *Thou*, he is neither a thing among things nor a collection of things. He is no longer he or she, bound by other Hes and Shes, a dot in the world grid of space and time, or a condition that can be felt and articulated. Although he is self-sufficient, this does not imply that there is no other existence. But everything else exists in *his* light. As with the one to whom I say *Thou*. I can take away his hair color, speech, and goodness. However, he is no longer in the position of *Thou*.[142]

This should be emphasizes that in an interreligious encounter, one should consider how to accept other's identity and maintain his identity or witness to Christ as a Christian at the same time. The emphasize is not in only keeping the peace, because circumstance with no conflict does not necessarily mean there is peace. In other words, giving witness to each respective religions should not be ignored on the ground to avoid conflict. [143]

Then, knowing the concept of relating to Muslims through the lens of *I-Thou*, what is the next step to ensure that Christians in Indonesia do not stop at simply defining their identity and turn radical? Christians need to keep the space "the between". According to Buber, the sphere of "the between" is a result of being human. The relationship between *I* and *Thou* is not localized, "either within individual souls", "as in individualism", or " as in collectivism, "but in actual fact between them". It is the "real place and bearer of what happens between men," the sphere in which true interaction occurs. Where I and *Thou* meet, there is the realm of *between.*[144]

According to Buber, behind the link between *I* and *Thou* lies a deeper and more extensive reality: the relationship between *I* and the *eternal Thou.* The *eternal Thou* can and does go by many names in different religions, but Buber refers to it as God. Every "particular *Thou*" provides a glimpse into the *eternal Thou*; the *eternal Thou* is present in every *Thou*. When the between is the reality of the relationship between *I* and *Thou*, it is also the reality of my relationship with the *eternal Thou*. It is unclear whether God's presence originates within or manifests via the interaction. Revelation occurs or is experienced in relation to, or while being

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[142] Buber*, Ich und Du*,14-15.
[143] Saefudin and Fathur Rohman, Peacefull Theology of Islam, Hindu, and Christian Religion in Plajan Pakis Aji Jepara, 393-402.
[144] Reitsma, The Between, 89.

with, the Other. But somehow the between can be understood as the realm of the Divine spirit, where we are aware of a breathe of the *eternal Thou*.[145]

In conclusion, how to use Buber's concept of *the between* for Christians in a polarized context, I will use two from three Bernhard Reitsma, a professor of Church and Theology with focus on Islam writing, "The Between: Leadership in Times of Polarization" (2023). Since last one is specifically related to leadership only, so I will not take it. He argues, that Buber's concept can help in finding fruitful ways to deal with polarization. First, it addresses the mental construct that arises when one encounters another as an equal, created by God. With that, the second law is addressed, that history, nationality, gender, and other characteristics do not shape one's identity; rather, the *eternal I/Thou* defines it. As someone who formed in the image of God one can no longer make broad assertions about the identities of others or employ simple "us" versus "them" distinctions, in which we are the good and they are the wicked.[146]

Reitsma expanded on this concept by referring to the primary confession of Christianity (and Islam), that God created everything that exists. He is the giver and sustainer of life. Thus, God is always differentiated from reality as the whole "other." That indicates that God has a relationship with both I and Thou, which is prior the relationship between I and Thou, in this case the relationship between Christians and Muslims. This relations initiated by God, which he refers to as the 'eternal initiator of relationship'. In other words, God more than a participant in the dialogue between I and Thou, rather, He is the all-encompassing and all-pervading third partner, whom he perceives as the first. So, the dialogue between *I* and *Thou* can also be referred to as a trialogue, as Toren does. [147]

So, to embody this concept in the everyday interaction of Christianity and Islam in Indonesia, I translate it as two things:

1. First and foremost, the space between *I* and *Thou* is established as a fact of life. God created both I and Thou in his image (Gen. 1:26), and both have equal standing in reference to God. Both are distinct, so Christian and Muslim cannot be the same. Real interaction necessitates two poles, and real identity requires the *Thou*. Therefore, the space between us is a given reality in creation, serving as a sacred place for people. And the space between *I* and *Thou* is not the

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145 Reitsma, The Between, 90.
146 Reitsma, The Between, 101-102.
147 Reitsma, The Between, 92-93.

same as the distance between God and us. God's between precedes and defines our own between.[148]

2. The value of the between implies that *I* and *Thou* have equal worth in diversity. Since each human being is a distinct individual made in the image of God. It does not imply that all persons are formed identically; rather, they are a diverse community with equal worth because of their common origin in the Creator. As a result, the between can be characterized as a secure place in which no one can dominate the other.[149]

In other words, what Christians (HKBP) need to do in their interactions with Muslims in Indonesia is to establish a space in between where people can leave their judgements behind and not place themselves as superior to the other. If Muslims are viewed as human beings in the same way that Christians are, the relationship will be equal, reciprocal. Neglecting this fact, viewing Muslims as an object to be examined, suggests that Christians are neglecting God in the trialogue. Not considering Muslims as God's creation implies that Christians no longer see God as the other's creator.[150]

Therefore, how this *between* concept looks like in theological-missiological models for Christians in their encounters with Muslims? I will explain it further by elaborating on it with some authors such as Newbigin, Moyaert.

5.3.1 Being Open and Faithful

The model that I can suggest for HKBP in encounters with Muslims is to be both open and faithful. Being open requires Christians to expect, look for, and welcome any manifestations of God's grace at work in the lives of those who do not know Jesus as Lord. Just as Jesus, who was ready to embrace evidences of faith from people outside the household of Israel. In these encounters with individuals who do not recognize Jesus as Lord, the first task is to seek out and embrace all reflections of that one real light in the lives of everyone Christians meet.[151]

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[148] Reitsma, The Between, 93-94.
[149] Reitsma, The Between, 94.
[150] Reitsma, The Between, 95.
[151] Newbigin, *The Gospel,* 180.

This can be understood as what Buber mentioned, the reality *between I* and *Thou* show relation *between I* and the *eternal Thou.*[152]

As a result of this openness, Christians may be willing to collaborate with people of all religions and ideologies on all projects that are consistent with Christians' sense of God's intention for the world[153] (*missio Dei*). According to Benno van den Toren, a professor of intercultural theology, in order to grasp God's will for each individual, one must consider his creation to have fellowship with other human beings, which requires the establishment of familiar bigger communities and peoples. In other words, one cannot be "human" as a single individual. Every human being seeks and requires fellowship with other humans in order to become completely human. [154] The human story is one that individuals all share—past, present, and future. Every day of in life, one must make decisions about what role he/she will play in the story, which one cannot do without considering the others who share it. They could be Christians, Muslims, Hindus, or another faith. They might have different interpretations of the story's meaning and ending, but there will be many points where Christians and other religions can agree on what should be done. There are campaigns for justice and freedom in which Christians can and should join forces with persons of other religions and ideologies to attain specific goals, even though as Christians, the ultimate purpose is Christ and his coming glory, and not others envision. [155]

As Christians collaborate with individuals of all religions, including Muslims, they may encounter points where the paths must diverge. Here is where the real discussion may begin. It's a real discussion about real topics. It is more than just sharing one's religious experiences, though this may occur. [156] In other words, Christians are expected to open themselves up to Muslims while maintaining their own identity. The discussion partners should maintain their identity while remaining open to people of other faiths. [157]

This is where the witness's commitment comes into action. Christians' most important contribution to the dialogue will be to recount the story of Jesus, the story of the Bible. It is not

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[152] Buber, *Ich und Du*, 12.
[153] Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 181.
[154] Benno van den Toren, *Christian Apologetics as Cross-Cultural Dialogue*, (London, New York: T&T Clark International, 2011), 100-101.
[155] Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 181.
[156] Newbigin, *The Gospel,* 181.
[157] Moyaert*, Fragile Identities*, 1.

Christians' responsibility to convert others. [158] Christians will fill the discussion with the news of Jesus that was reject and crucified is alive. And it is an outpouring of delight that they cannot contain. [159]

However, when it comes to the context of polarized Indonesia, where I can say sometimes the Muslims become part of the unsympathetic environment, Christians witness has to be shown in such a way as to suit this context. It requires some sensitivity from the Christians side how to give witness without offending Muslims as the majority of the country. Larry B. Jones who held a case study of Christian witness as minority in Asia, argued there are three models that Christian can use to give witness in their context: first, through counterculture; second, through engagement; third, through space. [160] I contend the last two of his models: engagement and space, can fit in the concept of *the between* that I discussed in previous point. Through these two models, HKBP as a Christian community in Indonesia, hopefully can live in a peaceful co-existence with Muslims and at the same time still keep their witness to Christ.

First, through *engagement*. Jones stated that under this concept, Christians can actively engage the people and structures of non-Christian communities in which they are. They are all explicit, visible Christian groups that live publicly as minorities in an unfriendly, sometimes hostile non-Christian milieu, aiming to bear testimony to the larger circumstances of their countries. Christian witness through engagement focuses on openness, integrity, patience, sensitivity, friendship, and a Christian care for the entire person. [161]

For example, on December 26, 2004, a tsunami destroyed Aceh, one of Indonesia's province. There have been 114,573 deaths, and 127,774 have been declared missing. Destruction and human misery on this scale pose a task and obligation for both the victims and those attempting to alleviate their pain. In this example, HKBP learned a lesson about concern, not religious preference, but compassion for one's neighbor. HKBP and other communities strive to help establish facilities such as schools, hospitals, mosques, churches, and markets. Discussing these topics creates opportunities for Muslims and Christians to connect. Muslims even joined a HKBP church after a conversation about disaster relief. [162] At this point HKBP as a Christian

[158] Newbigin, *The Gospel,* 182.

[159] Newbigin, *The Gospel,* 116.

[160] Larry B. Jones, "The Fragrance of Christ: A Case Study of Minority Witness in Asia", in *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 7, (2009), 57-66.

[161] Jones, The Fragrance of Christ, 60.

[162] Jamilin Sirait, "Lessons Learned after the Tsunami", in *Bridges instead of Walls: Christian-Muslim Interaction in Denmark, Indonesia, and Nigeria,* (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2007), 161-166.

community does not only achieve the goal to witness Christ through engagement with Muslims in Aceh, but also keep the peaceful coexistence.

The second model that may can be used by HKBP in its encounter with Muslim is through *space*. In this model, Christians witness must continually consider the vulnerable nature of their status as a religious minority. In Indonesia, being Christians, a minority means to face unique challenges and are frequently targeted by the majority. Some people face legal, occupational, and housing discrimination. The opportunity to participate in collective worship is frequently limited or abolished altogether. Some are subject to physical attacks and destruction of their houses of worship.[163]

It is true that Indonesia has a law in that guarantees everyone's freedom to practice their religion. In the *Undang-Undang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia* (The Constitution of Republic Indonesia), *Pasal 28 E, ayat 1* (Article 28E, Section 1): "*Setiap orang bebas memeluk agama dan beribadat menurut agamanya, memilih pendidikan dan pengajaran, memilih pekerjaan, memilih kewarganegaraan, memilih tempat tinggal di wilayah negara dan meninggalkannya, serta berhak kembali.*" (Everyone is free to embrace a religion and to worship according to his religion, to choose education and teaching, to choose a job, to choose citizenship, to choose a place of residence in the territory of the state and to leave it, and to return.).[164] However, what happens sometimes differs from the ideal depiction, as I explained in chapters 2 and 3 about the conflict between religions, especially Christianity and Islam in Indonesia, which is polarized.

For instance, in the beginning of June 2024, Joko Widodo, Indonesia's president allows religious organizations to manage mines on the basis of *Peraturan Pemerintah* (Government Regulation) Number 25 of 2024, which amends *Peraturan Pemerintah* (Government Regulation) Number 96 of 2021 for the implementation of Mineral and Coal Mining Business Activities.[165] In this case, HKBP, based on its 1996 Confession, believes that this organization is responsible for preserving the environment from human exploitation. HKBP humbly

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[163] Jones, The Fragrance of Christ, 62-63.

[164] One of the articles issued by the government of Republic Indonesia relating to religious diversity. https://www.mkri.id/index.php?page=web.Berita&id=11505#:~:text=Pernyataan%20Kapolri%20bahkan%20bisa%20dianggap,Pasal%2028E%20ayat%20(1). Access: 14th June, 2024.

[165] The government prepared six former coal mining work agreements (PKP2B) for six organisations to manage: Former PT Arutmin Indonesia, PT Kendilo Coal Indonesia, PT Kaltim Prima Coal, PT Adaro Energy Tbk, PT Multi Harapan Utama (Mau), and PT Kideco Jaya Agung. One of the report of this decision: https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/c1ddgk11v0yo

declares that it will not serve as a Church to mine. And also urge the country's authorities to take decisive action against miners who violate environmental regulations.[166]

It is quite similar to the example that is used by Jones when he wrote about one of his Christian friends in Indonesia who refused to be involved in a formulation of government policy invited by *Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia* (Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals/ ICMI). With the reason that it is not beneficial for Indonesian Christians to overemphasize their Christian identity in public discourse. A generous act of evenhanded love would build trust, allowing Christians and Muslims to coexist peacefully and providing social space for the church to give witness of God's love in that area.[167]

5.3.2 HKBP- Pursuing Peaceful Coexistence and Witnessing Christ

Thus, with *the between* notion, HKBP and its encounters with Muslims in a polarized setting might gain a fresh perspective, emphasizing that a peaceful coexistence of Christianity and Islam in Indonesia and Christians' witness to their religion are not incompatible. As a result, HKBP and other Indonesian Christians do not necessarily have to choose between the two. If HKBP continues to support only one of the possibilities, it suggests that it is still providing fuel for Indonesia's polarization.

The between from a Christian perspective, represents God's revelation of grace and salvation. *The between* is where the cross confronts Christians with both the reality of sin and God's grace. This is a space where the duality of "us" and "them" is overcome. This is a space of equal grace and a suspension of judgment towards others. Only God, as the everlasting I, is qualified to judge. The "between" space will allow Christians to acknowledge their role in conflict and polarization. Recognizing the humanity of others forces people to reflect on their own limits and recognize that their perspectives are not always correct.[168]

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[166] HKBP Ephorus Press Statement on the church participating in the Global Warming Era. https://hkbp.or.id/article/pernyataan-pers-ephorus-hkbp-tentang-gereja-ikut-bertambang
[167] Jones, The Fragrance of Christ, 63.
[168] Reitsma, The Between, 96.

With that said, I will look back to what HKBP recognizes as its identity: [169] 1. A community who are called from the world, gathered and sanctified into the church, and sent into the world to proclaim the gospel of God in Jesus Christ and to be a blessing to the world. 2. God'*s* instrument to carry out God's mission as witnessed by the Bible based on faith, love, and hope. In obedience to God's mission, HKBP is called to always live the example of the Lord Jesus in giving, sharing, and sacrificing.

And the mission related to relationships with other religions: [170]

3rd mission: To preach the gospel to the unchurched and those who have drifted away from the church.

4th Mission: to pray and deliver the *prophetic message* to the people and the nation

5th Mission to salt and illuminate Batak, Indonesian, and Global culture with the Gospel.

This emphasizes that HKBP already has a certain theology of its existence in relation to the world. But at the same time, this is where HKBP needs to create *the between* by presenting itself as an equal fellow with others, through mercy and suspending judgment, and showing that the reality that connects Christians with God and Christians with others is the work of the Holy Spirit. Surely there are already many efforts put in by HKBP in order to build a good relationship with Muslims and show their witness. But from a Christian perspective, *the between* is not a fixed safe area, rather it is a world is constantly threatened by destructive polarization and requires constant creation and reinvention to defeat evil. In other words, HKBP need to show that God works through the Spirit continuously to the completion of *the between.[171]*

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[169] HKBP, *The Confession of Faith of the HKBP,* Pematangsiantar: Percetakan HKBP, 130.
[170] HKBP, *The Confession*, 130.
[171] Reitsma, The Between, 97-98.

Conclusion

From the discussion in this chapter, I can conclude that models for Christians-Muslim encounters in Indonesia have been explored. Many people think that simply pluralist view can be the solution for this diversity and polarized context of Indonesia. But with some critiques from Newbigin, and Moyaert I contend that simply pluralism cannot be the solution. Therefore, with the concept of *the between* from Martin Buber, I elaborate it to come to a point that Christians in Indonesia, especially HKBP need to be stand in between, being open and faithful at the same time. Keeping a peaceful coexistence and witnessing Christ at the same time. Two models by Jones can be and already used by HKBP in encountering Muslims. These models certainly cannot be understood as a rigid way. This should be understood as an ongoing endeavour and should always be pursued. I will use Moyaert's argument to close this chapter. Every Christian who engages in interreligious discussion finds himself in a difficult position, since there appears to be no precise balance in the tense a combination between openness and faith commitment. Christian theological reflection taught that dialogue and openness are central to Christian identity. However, there is no clear answer on how open believers should be. There is no fixed proportion or exact balance. They must live within the tension. Therefore, to believe is a continuous search.[172]

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[172] Moyaert, *Fragile Identities*, 277-278.

CONCLUSION

I start this research by asking: "Which theological-missiological perspective on Christian-Muslim relationships can help the HKBP (Batak Christian Protestant Church) in their desire for peaceful living together with Muslims and their witnessing Christ?" In the previous chapters, I attempted to answer this topic using systematic literature reviews, with some accounts of issues relating to HKBP and Muslims in Indonesia. I believe that this conversation with ideas from authors helps to reflect and explore the relationships between these two religious groups, and in the Chapter 5 I also almost conclude this main question. However, I will briefly detail some points below as a conclusion to my thesis.

First, before I get into the major theme of pursuing peaceful coexistence while also proclaiming Christ, it is important to note that the situation between HKBP and Muslims in Indonesia has a lengthy history that dates back hundreds of years. This is vital to notice so that both parties understand that the current conflicts or avoidance between these two groups is not new, and therefore more effort need to be put into this. Some of the reasons are fear of being Christianized or being Islamized, or some simply just want to avoid conflict as much as they can, even when it means limiting themselves not to talk about religions and only communicate to the extent that they are comfortable and not different.

This is a difficult issue to solve due to the depth of this root problem, and it is only becoming worse as a result of the growing Indonesian polarization, particularly in religion and politics. Polarization transforms how Christianity and Islam are regarded in Indonesia into us versus them. We are good, and they are bad. Everything is perceived as two opposites, black and white, so for many Christians, the relationship with Muslims is a choice between living in peace with Muslims and bringing witness to Christ, even if it means losing that peace.

Hence, there are steps have been taken by both Muslims and Christians in Indonesia to live in harmony, or to witness their belief. Two of which are working together for the common good and witnessing Christ. Both of these efforts have their advantages and disadvantages both for their own religious communities and for other religious communities. Therefore I suggest that learning from the concept of *the between* and developing through a Christian perspective will help HKBP to build a good relationship with Muslims and stay clear about its witness.

The between means HKBP needs to put aside its position for a moment and try to be present with Muslims without judgment. It does not necessarily mean I am suggesting HKBP to leave

its perspective, but leaving some space where they can listen to Muslims and get a learn to understand each other, and I believe this issue of misunderstanding also give major contribution to the conflict or avoidance between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia.

Finally, I am convinced that building a peaceful coexistence with Muslim and in Indonesia and keeping witness is not an easy task for Christians, in this case, HKBP. There is no specific guideline or step for how far should Christian be open to Muslims and how far should they keep the witness. Furthermore, Christians cannot attempt to do this work once. Keeping the peace and the witness at the same time is an ongoing processes that need to be examinated continuously. However, this is not an impossible task. *The between* is a space that exist between God and human and human to human. *The between* of God is before human's. Therefore I believe in God's work through the holy spirit to achieve *the between*, the peaceful coexistence of Christian and Muslim and a true witness to Christ at the same time.

EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS AND THE METHODOLOGY USED

I use the systematic literature method. So far this is the most feasible and effective method for me. Through this systematic literature study, I will focus on the previous research that has already been written there, trying to analyze it with the situation I encountered in the current Indonesian context and try to find what could be the solution. There are also other options such as an empirical approach, through qualitative research namely interviews, but since the context of this research is specifically in Indonesia, my presence in the Netherlands should be put into consideration. Indeed, interviews can be conducted online, but the sense of engagement that is the essence of qualitative research may be reduced.

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