



Mission Theology in the context of a Multiple Society

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Doi: <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.103.2015>

Abstract

This study aims to examine the mission theology in the context of multiple or pluralistic society. The context of a multiple society is in Indonesia and it is contextual perspective challenge. In the results of the study, the results show that being a witness of God and having a dialogue in the context of a multiple society to preach the gospel is challenging. The question for Evangelical Christians is how to remain loyal to the Great Commission. There needs to be a proportional-Biblical theological basis on how the text/message of the Bible can be implemented in such a context. We believe that God's Word, including the Great Commission must be preached to all the world. Starting from the above background, this paper offers: 1) An explanation of some terms and problem limitations, 2) Mission Theology and contextualization in Indonesia as a plural society, and the implementation of Mission Theology on Contextualization in this society.

Keywords: Mission theology, context, multiple society, diversity

Introduction

“Europe is likely to become part of the Western Arab world by the end of this century”, according to Bernard Lewis, an influential Muslim scholar. This statement was not rejected by the International Mission Board of The Southern Baptist Convention organization. Along with globalization, the flow of population mobility and migration, especially from East to West, is getting higher. Chris Mills from IMB said: “Indigenous Europeans have low birth (natality) rates, while many immigrants (Muslims) moving to Europe have high birth rates. It is only a matter of time before there is a shift in the balance of culture and perspective (Józwiak, 2006).” The implications of this phenomenon are: The Western world is currently experiencing what Alvin Toffler calls 'future shock' and 'plural shock' (Toffler, 1998).

In contrast to Western countries, in eastern countries, especially in Indonesia, such a situation should not come as a surprise. For thousands of years, Indonesians have experienced living as a pluralistic society in the sense of being multi-ethnic and multi-religious. Bagus Surjantoro is right, when he says that for many friends from Western countries (who are mono-religious contexts), experiences with people of other religions are expensive to learn. As for us (who are multi-religious contexts), God has prepared and provided that experience every day before our eyes (Surjantoro, 2003). But in reality, the relationship between people of different religions remains, or is increasingly becoming a problem. In fact, this problem was once categorized as



SARA (Ethnicity, Religion, Race and Inter-group). Even though it looks calm on the outside, we feel a hidden and turbulent tension beneath the surface.

Research Methods

The method used in this study was a descriptive literature study methodology which contains a description and explanation of the problem of the data obtained. The writing procedure began with the search for materials in accordance with the subject matter, both from libraries, and other media such as journals, magazines, and the internet. The three main terms that need to be explained in this research paper were: 'Mission Theology', 'Contextualization' and 'Plural Society'

Results and discussion

Mission Theology

Theology of mission comes from the words 'theology' and 'mission'. Theology is the science of God and his relationship with humans and the universe. Mission (mission, band. *Apostello*), contrary to what most people understand, has a much broader meaning than 'evangelism'. It refers to God's purpose for the existence of the church as a whole in this world. The term 'mission theology' was originally used in connection with mission education/learning, which refers to a practical level, but primarily a theoretical level. At the theoretical level, 'mission theology' emphasizes the theological/dogmatic aspects of the Bible about mission, namely a description of the intricacies of biblical teachings that explain aspects of mission (Collins, 1996). Without intending to ignore other aspects of the mission, or otherwise explain all aspects of the mission in its entirety, the focus of this paper is on the subject of 'contextualization'. The aim is to emphasize the important points of mission theology about contextualization that are relevant and important to be implemented in the context of a pluralistic society without reducing and betraying the message of the mission itself.

Contextualization

The definition applied by a person to this term is very dependent on the theological views behind that person. The following is a fairly evangelical definition of contextualization (con-textere) according to Bruce Nichols: "Translating the unchanging content of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God into forms that are meaningful to nations in their respective cultures and circumstances/contexts" (Nichols, 1975). Meanwhile, according to Peters, Contextualization is: "Discovering the legitimate implications of the gospel in certain circumstances. Finding implications is required by the correct interpretation of the text" (Peters, 1977).

Compound Society

The term 'compound society' in the title of this paper is deliberately used to avoid misunderstanding as if this paper is a theological apologetics against the concept of 'religious pluralism' which is currently spreading. Religious Pluralism is a relatively new (contemporary) theology of religions movement. In Christian circles, 'religious pluralism' as a theological system became popular in the 1980s through the writings of John Hick, the British-born theologian and philosopher of religion (1922). In contrast to 'religious pluralism', the plurality of society in Indonesia is a classic phenomenon, which is older than Indonesia itself.

The term 'plural society' is also used in this paper because the phrase is felt to refer more to 'awareness of the existence of religious plurality' rather than to 'the desire to equate these different religions'. If Pluralism is defined as an evaluation of the attitude that should be in responding to the fact of pluralism, which leads to the teaching that all religions are equal/parallel paths and both lead to God to obtain salvation, then this understanding is not appropriate. with



the intent of this paper. Pluralism is defined as a description of the fact of pluralism in society and that no modern human being can deny the fact of the diversity of contexts of life today (both ethnicity, culture and religion).

The Birth of the term Contextualization

The word 'contextualization' first appeared in the publication of TEF (Theological Education Fund – 1972), initiated by the International Missionary Council at its trial in Ghana (1957-58), which resulted in a 'mandate' and a 'focus' on Third World countries (Hasselgrave & Rommen, 1996).

In later developments, as Hasselgrave points out, the early proponents of contextualization were successful in persuading others to accept the term 'contextualization', but they were less successful in persuading others to accept its meaning and method. Some pessimists, such as Fleming, conclude that the word 'contextualization' is so polluted by liberal preconceptions, misunderstandings and confusion that it is better not to use it. He, followed by others, suggested the use of other terms (Hasselgrave & Rommen, 1996). Most evangelical scholars accept the word contextualization, but reinterpret it, rejecting the meaning given by the initiators of the TEF. They generally agree that definitions should express sensitivity to context as well as loyalty to the Bible. Their principle: The Bible must interpret the Bible. The Bible must speak in its own context and judge and judge them and their culture. It is clear, that there is no general agreement on the word 'contextualization'.

Two Dangers of Contextualization

This point is important to answer the question “How important is contextualization”? The two dangers are: first, if contextualization is not carried out. This will result in the irrelevance of theology. Second, if contextualization is done with too much enthusiasm. This will risk compromise and syncretism. In preaching the gospel, we must use culturally appropriate forms as long as the gospel is not refuted. If this is not done, then there is a possibility that only the surface layers of the culture will be changed, not the inner layers. The only possible option for dealing with these two dangers is a faithful contextualization of both the indigenous culture and the authority of the Bible (Widjaja, 2020). In addition, contextualization must start from 'faith in the revelation of God in Christ'. Similarities may be found in different cultures, as was the case when the Apostle Paul preached in Athens, but culture does not provide a starting point (Homrighausen & Enklaar, 2007).

The Bible's Testimony of Contextualization

What can we find in the Bible that bridges linguistic and cultural differences so that God's purposes, and not human plans, are accomplished? In the Old Testament, it is difficult to find examples of cross-cultural communication in terms of delivering a particular religious message, but cross-cultural encounters are not few. Nevertheless, the Old Testament lays a strong foundation of contextualization through the fact of God's self-revelation in Creation. Unlike the Old Testament, the New Testament is a document created precisely by the missionary program that was taking place in the early church. This makes it easier to recognize contextualization examples. In the NT, contextualization is often a conscious effort, with a goal that is also filled with awareness: the delivery of the gospel message.

One thing that should not be forgotten, Jesus is true contextualization. His incarnation was a *kenosis*, becoming a 100% true human without ever giving up his 100% Deity. It is not only the Word that is contextualized in the flesh. As a true human being, He practiced contextualization in His ministry in the midst of society 2000 years ago. Hasselgrave and Rommen suggest several ways that can be taken to examine contextualization activities in the New Testament: (1) By paying attention to people, namely believers who are involved in the mission of preaching the



Good News. They deal with cultural barriers and try to develop ways to overcome them; (2) By paying attention to literary works, especially the New Testament document itself. Each of the Gospels, for example, reflects the culture of its author and is clearly addressed to a specific audience of readers; (3) By highlighting the efforts of early church leaders to create the basis for a continuous and orderly contextualization of the gospel. By combining the three approaches above, this paper will focus specifically on the contextualization of the Apostle Paul (Hasselgrave & Rommen, 1996).

The experiences of the Apostles Paul and Barnabas in Thessalonica, Athens and Lystra (Acts 14:8-20; 17:1-8; 16-34) are examples of contextual evangelism. The problems faced by the two apostles were linguistics (language) and culture. The two apostles were initially unaware of the particular legend that had generated a public reaction. (The gods Zeus and Hermes traveled in the form of two old men, Philemon and Baucis). Given this background, it is not difficult to understand the reaction of the people of Lystra to Paul and Barnabas. They didn't want to repeat their first mistake against Zeus and Hermes. It is clear that failure to account for cultural differences can result in significant misunderstandings. On the other hand, in the Areopagus, Athens, the Apostle Paul was quite familiar with the culture and philosophical-legendary background of his listeners. Starting from the context of his audience, the apostle Paul leads them from unknown gods to the living God, who has revealed himself through nature, history and finally through Jesus Christ.

Theological Views (Mission) on Contextualization

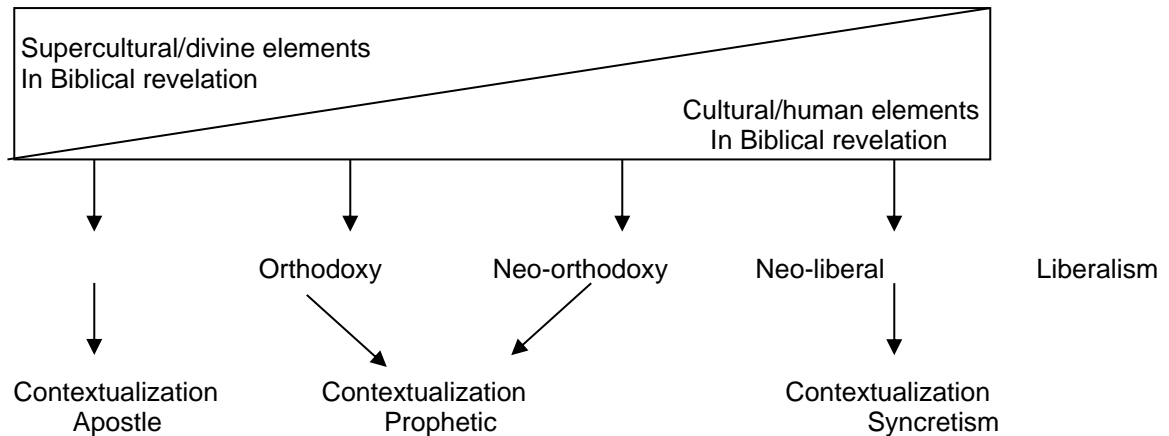
The importance of context for meaning has long been emphasized by communication experts. The relationship between theological views and the meaning assigned to the term contextualization is equally important. Certain theological views, especially Mission Theology, will underlie and determine the meaning of contextualization and contextualization efforts. Therefore, it is very necessary to assess certain contextualization efforts by paying attention to the theological views that are behind them.

When we proceed in this way, we are immediately confronted with the question of the authority of the Bible. The basis of any theological view is known by the way its proponents view and use the Bible. Within this framework, we can place theological views on a continuum indicating the relative weight they give to super-cultural or text-context elements.

There are four very different but generally recognized theological views: (1) the Orthodox view; (2) Liberal Views; (3) Neo-orthodox views; (4) Neo-liberal views.

In summary: Liberal theology tends to be more influenced by the contemporary context, while the more orthodox-conservative theology tends to be less influenced. On the one hand, there is a contextualization effort that almost gave birth to a 'new gospel'. On the other hand, there is contextualization that helps convey the 'old gospel' (apostolic contextualization). Each theological position in the above continuum has implications for the understanding and contextualization efforts they undertake (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
 Continuum of Theological Views and Kinds of Contextualization Built



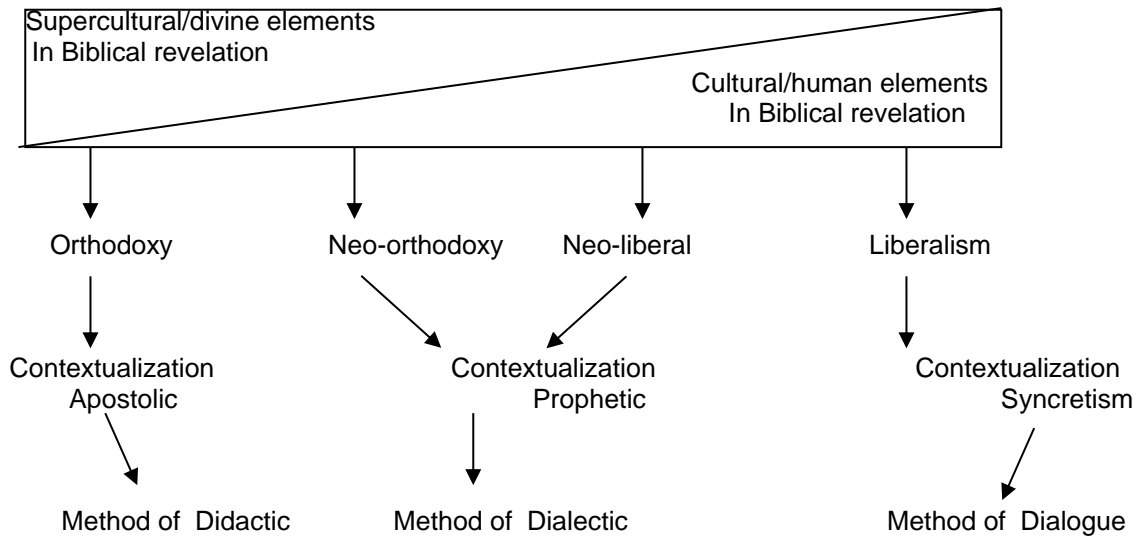
Thomas, John Hick and Wilfred Cantwell Smith are examples of people who represent advocates of Syncretic Contextualization. Trying to select the best ideas from every culture, religion and ideology, and then develop a 'religion' that transcends all. Hick writes: "We live in the middle of an unfinished stream; we believe that continued dialogue will be a dialogue that leads to truth, so that in the knowledge of a more perfect truth, these opposing teachings will eventually be swallowed up by the ultimate truths"(Hasselgrave & Rommen, 1996). In its development today, this idea has become sharper in what is called 'religious pluralism'. Of course the above differences are not just word differences. There are important differences in methods and results.

Each has a different method (Widjaja, 2020). (1) Liberal Dialogue Method – seeking the truth. The results of the 1970 WCC trial are an example of this method. The assembly resulted in the so-called 'Dialogue between people of living faiths'. Phrases such as: "new spirituality", inter-faith spirituality, "new relationship with God", "our dialogue is not the end but the beginning", etc. (2) Neo-liberal Dialectical Method – finding the truth. An example of this method is G. Gutierrez's 'liberation theology'. He did not begin with the Bible, but with a sensitive response to human suffering.

The goal is to improve the world, not the new human birth. (3) Neo-orthodox Dialectical Method – finding the truth. This method is different from the Neo-liberal method, in that the Neo-liberal Methodology believes more in the soul of the theological actor, while the Neo-orthodox Method believes more in the Spirit of God who illuminates theology. But the similarity between the two is that there is a common emphasis on the historical context of the present, namely the context in which we live and do theology.

On the one hand we need to understand and adapt to the worldview of our listeners. But it must also be emphasized that Christ must be presented in accordance with biblical historical Christianity, not existential-mythological. The evangelists in the New Testament didn't just preach the gospel as truth; they also give an 'apologia' or defense when the gospel is challenged. The four models and their results above if described are as follows (see Figure 2):

Figure 2
 Theological, Method and Product Views - Embraced Contextualization



It is clear that there are various meanings, methods and models attached to the word 'contextualization'. The TEF members who first coined the word 'contextualization' did not hesitate to talk about 'authentic contextualization'. But for them, it is as far as how to understand culture and how to relate news to context. On the other hand, for Evangelicals, authenticity is primarily concerned with the faithfulness of a message to the authority and content of God's will as revealed in His creation, in the human conscience, and especially in His Son and His Word inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Successful preaching springs from understanding the listeners in their context and the active ministry of the Holy Spirit in us and in them. From this point of view, Christian contextualization can be understood as an attempt to proclaim the message of the person, work, Word and will of God in a way that is faithful to the divine revelation that is especially expressed in the Bible, and which is also meaningful to audiences in their respective cultures and contexts. The extent to which an attempt at contextualization can be judged adequate and authentic is measured by its level of faithfulness in reflecting the meaning of the Bible. From church history we learn that the Holy Spirit guides in such a way that the points of biblical theology can be applied in specific cultural circumstances. Church history also testifies that commitment to the gospel will face inevitable risks. But the gospel always wins.

Whatever the meaning of contextualization, the person doing it must understand the message he wants to convey as well as the culture and thoughts of the listeners who will receive it. Clearly, he must understand the message revealed by God in the Bible, and also understand the views of listeners who have inadequate or erroneous knowledge of God's revelation. Contextualization (translating, explaining, and applying) should be faithful to the nature (and message) of biblical revelation, and correct deficiencies and distortions about revelation in other religious traditions.

Indonesia as a Multiple Community

When John Naisbitt, in his book *Megatrends 2000* predicts that one of the emerging trends in the 21st century is religious revival, it is because for our brothers and sisters living in Europe and America, religious pluralism is a problem. which they had never encountered before. For centuries they lived only with fellow Christians. But in Indonesia, such pluralism should come as



no surprise. Indonesian Christians have lived and are living in a very pluralistic society. That is, in the midst of people of other religions or beliefs.

The diversity that is almost second to none is a concrete manifestation of God's grace for us, the Indonesian people. This plurality includes both ethnicity, religion, culture and geographical areas. Bait Seloka in Mpu Tantular's Madah Sutasoma says: *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika Tan Hanna Dharma Mangrwa*, which means "To serve and be faithful to different principles but still one as a truth that is second to none." Since the beginning, the founding fathers of our country have recognized this and anticipated it wisely so that the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution as the constitutional basis was born. "All for all!", "There is no religious egoism", "Cultivated divinity", those were Sukarno's words in his speech on the birth of Pancasila in front of the BPUPKI Session, June 1, 1945.

History records Mohamad Hatta, who was responsible and unwilling if Indonesia (Eastern Indonesia) was torn apart because of the 'seven word case' incident in the Jakarta Charter. This reference, and many other references are still well recorded. However, can we still live in 'diversity but in unity' and 'unity in diversity' according to the hopes and dreams of 'The Founding Fathers'? The following are some of the materials for the Seminar on Religions organized by the Balitbang PGI in Cisarua, September 14-20 1993 which reflect concerns and concerns about the role and relationship between religions in Indonesia entering the 21st century.

21st: 'Harmony Doesn't Merely Touch the Dogmatic Beliefs of Religions', 'Narrow fanaticism and anti-pluralism need to be prevented', 'Sentiment between peoples must always exist', 'Towards openness and humility for the sake of change', 'Religion and Universal Concerns of Humanity', 'Future Religious Crisis, Cult and Fundamentalism' (Widjaja, 2020).

Majority and Minority Issues

Christianity as a minority group in Indonesia is a classic reality. The same thing happens with the Muslim religion in Western countries. But the surprising fact is that during 1993-2002, the percentage of Americans who identified themselves as Christian decreased from 63% to 52%, and increased from 9% to 14% of Americans who said they did not belong to a single religion. This survey, conducted by the "National Opinion" Research Center at the University of Chicago, shows that Christianity is starting to lose its majority status. Is the above fact something that scares Christians? Tom Slack, spokesman for The United Methodist West Ohio Conference actually believes that there is a positive meaning behind the above trend. "The church has always been at its highest zeal, passion, innovation, and significance even when the church was at its minority status (Widjaja, 2020)" (compare with. Acts 8:1b). Christians in Indonesia should be optimistic and strong precisely because of their minority status. The word 'crisis' in Chinese is Weiji, consisting of the word Wei which means difficulty and the word Ji which means opportunity. So in Chinese philosophy, in every difficulty, every crisis there is always an opportunity (Surjantoro, 2003).

In His parables of the "mustard seed" and of the "leaven" (Matthew 13:31-35), Jesus teaches us not to be hypnotized by seemingly insignificant worldly measures. A small mustard seed will convincingly become a tree nested in by the birds, meaning one that fulfills its function perfectly as a tree. Just a little dough, by a supernatural power from outside will turn a large amount of flour, which will eventually provide enough to feed the entire large family.

Implementation Of Mission Theology On Contextualization In A Multiple Indonesian Society

There is a change that is happening in the history of world Christianity in the 21st century, namely the shifting of the central axis of Christianity from Western countries to Third World countries.



The facts show that the number of Christians in Third countries has exceeded the number of Christians in Western countries. In 1995 alone, 41% of the world's Christians were in Western countries, while the remaining 59% were in Third World countries. In 2000, the number of missionaries sent from the Western church was approximately 120,000, while the number of missionaries from the Third World church was 163,000. In this day and age, the Western Church is no longer the center of Christianity. This shifting of the central axis brings great responsibility for mission to the Third World churches.

Along with the transfer of mission responsibilities to Third World countries, the implementation of Mission Theology on 'contextualization', as well as a high commitment to contextualization Authenticity is increasingly needed. The increasing complexity and complexity of the problems of pluralism in Indonesian society that require various accommodations often leads mission practitioners to be trapped in a dialogue method that seeks to base itself on Liberal and Neo-liberal theology. Eka Darmaputra, for example, believes that theology can only be called theology if it is truly contextual, because theology essentially brings together/dialectics text (*kerygma*) and context (space and time). But the context he emphasizes is the historical context of the present, namely the context in which we live and do theology. The biblical revelation in the past is only a compass, we must choose a specific path based on current events.

John Hick's 'Religious Pluralism' is an example of a Christian's absolute willingness to accommodate all external demands (world, context), only so that Christianity can be accepted and considered to have a pluralist spirit. And this willingness to emphasize context at the expense of the (Bible) text like this will undoubtedly destroy the truths of Christian orthodoxy and weaken the Church's mission of proclaiming the Good News. Hick's act of placing context above the text led to the revision and mutilation of the basic doctrines of Christianity.

The following are some practical principles of implementing Mission Theology in the context of the contextualization of the Gospel that need to be seriously considered and taken into account.

Communication is the Key

Jeff King, President of International Christian Concern (Washington's International Christian Observatory) told the Baptist Press that around 10,000 Christians in Indonesia have been massacred in the last five years. In addition, 1000 churches were destroyed along with the destruction of 80,000 Christian homes (Coates, 2003). The theory that 'effective evangelism of a group of people or a nation requires requiring one local body of Christ for every about 1000 people' may be true. However, without intending to ignore the factors of political interference and games, considering the facts above, the question is whether the church and Christians have become so alien in the midst of their community?

In his review of "The Mission of Unreligious Christianity", Gerald Coates said that the key to successful evangelism is communication (Coates, 2003). Jesus is a great Communicator. The only possible way we can know about God is through the things He has chosen to reveal Himself to us. Beyond that, we know nothing. God reveals Himself through His Creation, History and our Conscience. But God has spoken to us primarily through Jesus Christ. Jesus communicated in different ways according to His listeners and the circumstances. When dealing with Pharisees, Gentiles, in public and private He created dialogue. What is dialogue? Dialogue is a conversation between two or more people representing different beliefs, with the intent to clear up understanding or to get rid of misunderstandings in order to create a better and more harmonious relationship. Dialogue is not an attempt to convince others to be drawn into our beliefs, especially if it is accompanied by hidden cunning. Regarding Christian approaches to other religions, Siburian put forward 4 positions: (1) the position of exclusivism; (2). The Inclusivism Position; (3) the position of relativism (pluralism); and (4) accommodative position (Coates, 2003).



Question: How should we behave, if we have tried hard to do good, but people are still hostile to us, suppressing us and hating us? This is a legitimate question. Doing good to others does not guarantee that people will also do good to us. That is why, the Bible says, "As much as it depends on you, live at peace with all people" (Romans 12:18). If we already want peace, but the other party doesn't, it is clear that there is no peace. But most importantly, don't let the uneasy situation be caused by us.

Question: What if we have tried our best but are not welcomed by the other party (applause)? First, don't be surprised. Jesus said that a disciple cannot exceed his teacher. If this world rejects Jesus, hates and slanders Jesus, how can we expect this world to accept us if we are faithful and follow Him? Romans 1:8 "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Oppression or suffocation or persecution, or famine or nakedness, or danger, or the sword?" God does not promise comfort and convenience. He only promises, nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Second, don't be afraid, don't panic, but don't hate either (John 16:33). Third, lest what they reject is Christ, but our behavior that they witness. The Apostle Peter records this historical-prophetic fact: "So that when they slander you as a wicked person..." (1 Peter 2:12b). Christians are slandered as ungodly not because they are evil, but because they are seen/witnessed differently (1 Peter 4:4). The word *epopteuontes* (to look upon, to observe) is in the present participle which means to pay attention continuously.

The Apostle Peter invites the followers of Christ to have a different spirit, a spirit of deference, even if they experience suffering they should not experience. Deference does not imply tacit approval, approval or passivity. Deference refers to an appropriate and proper attitude, which results in behavior characterized by an attitude of respect. This is not the same as obedience to authority, although obedience represents an expression of difference. In 1 Pet 2:17, an attitude of difference is recommended for believers in their relationships. This attitude is also seen in the words *hupakouo* (to obey, 1 Peter 3:6), *timao* (to honor, respect, 1 Peter 2:17), or *hupotasso* (to subordinate themselves, 1 Peter 2:13, 18; 3 :1-5: 5:5). Christians submit not because of coercion, but because they intend to obey (Hendi, 2020).

The term 'Christianization', whether it is at the level of reality or issues, is a trigger for religious emotions. There is a certain trauma associated with this terminology in history. But 'Christianization' itself as a term is not found in Bible dictionaries, let alone in the vocabulary of the Lord Jesus. The Christian must be able to communicate this truth to others, including when he or she is evangelizing.

Conclusion

Within a century, Indonesian society has changed from a traditional plural community to a crucial plural community. It is clear that the 'multireligious complex' nature of Indonesia cannot be ignored. Although the level of complexity of pluralism is relative to each country, in reality, this plurality is a universal phenomenon. The Bible testifies that it was by the will of God that man, from one man had spread to all corners of the earth, and that He had determined the boundaries of the territory where each nation (*ethnos*) lived (Deuteronomy 32:8; Acts 17:26). In the context of mission, the stripetal movement of these nations was replaced by the centrifugal movement of the messengers of Christ. It is precisely in this context that the first challenges for the messengers of Christ along with their response to the 'great commission'.

Contextualization of the Gospel Message is becoming very urgent in Indonesia. The facts seems to show that the multi-complex nature of human pluralism (both ethnically, culturally and religiously) is relatively more dominant in Third World countries. As described in this paper, the term 'contextualization' emerged with the attention and focus on Third World countries.

Contextualization in order to convey the message of the gospel carries with it dangers, either



because it is completely ignored, or vice versa, because it is used with too much enthusiasm. In connection with these two tendencies, we must realize that the theological level of praxis that applies is based on a valid doctrinal level (*'Lex Orandi Lex Credendi'*). Observing the continuum of theological tendencies that emerged from the 'post-first church', 'pre/post-reformation' to the 'postmodern era', commitment to the unchanging gospel as stated and communicated in the Bible is a price that must be at stake in contextualization. On the one hand, the contextualization results must be compatible with the authority and message of the Bible, and on the other hand, it must be related to the cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds of the recipients.

We can try to change the context by approaching the authorities of the context, in this case the government. But we also need to ask ourselves, what kind of theological paradigm is wrong and which needs to be evaluated and changed? We believe that the gospel can change this world.

We need to communicate the gospel in a relevant, clear and direct manner, without neglecting the supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit, who is secretly and mysteriously working with his power (*dunamis*) in every messenger of Christ, and at the same time in individuals according to the context they are in (Acts 1:8). We must not let go of our commitment to the Triune God and the finality of Christ. The basis of the great message, lies not in our superiority, or in the disbelief of heretics. The premise is "All power has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). Therefore go..."For Christ sent me...to preach the gospel; and even then, not with the wisdom of speech, lest the cross of Christ be made void" (1 Corinthians 1:17). The key word is 'wisdom of speech' (*sophia* wisdom, wisdom, and *logou*, singular genitive of logos). Logos can mean both words and intelligence, and is the basis of the word logic, and reasoning. Words are nothing but intelligence expressed. *Sophia logou* means natural wisdom expressed in words. Human wisdom expressed in words is not enough to convey the Good News. The Apostle Paul taught that we should not rely entirely on our natural talents when preaching the gospel, "..., that the cross of Christ may not be in vain." Only the cross of Christ can convert sinners to accept the gospel.

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