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Diversity as a Call of Faith: Christian Theological Foundations and the Synergy of Pancasila Ideology in Religious Moderation in Indonesia

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Abstract

This paper analyses Christian theology's influence on teaching and promoting religious moderation and the embrace of diversity in Indonesia, using both theological and Pancasila ideological frameworks. Findings were derived from qualitative library research involving biblical texts and theological writings, as well as documents from the Indonesian State and the Religious Harmony Index for 2024–2025. Claims regarding ground-level interfaith interaction draw on national survey data and institutional reports, rather than direct fieldwork observation. The research showed that for Indonesian Christians, diversity is more than a sociopolitical fact; it is a vocation and a divine calling that stems from the doctrines of creation, imago Dei, and love of neighbour. Hence, Pancasila is not seen as a secular ideology competing with Christianity, but rather as a covenantal civic ideology that enables the expression of Christian values for the common good — justice, peace, and human dignity. Further, historical analyses of the writings of Christian leaders during the formation of the constitution of Indonesia suggest a deep commitment to the unity and oneness of the State. Furthermore, it is shown that, while religious harmony and tolerance of different faiths in the nation are statistically documented, they are absent in face-to-face grassroots interactions of those diverse faiths. The author argues that religious moderation should be seen as a shared theology that can be fostered through Christian education and the Church's practices, and that the country's diverse, democratic, and pluralistic framework should be the focus for its development.

Keywords: Christian Theology, Pancasila, Diversity, Religious Moderation, Harmony.

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Introduction

Indonesia's grand narrative of diversity is unparalleled worldwide. With thousands of islands, a multitude of ethnic groups, and a rich plurality of languages and religions, the nation stands on the foundation of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika—"Unity in Diversity." This principle represents a commitment and collective efforts to preserve national unity (Ananta et al., 2015; Arifin et al., 2015; Hoon, 2017; Riyanto et al., 2022; Yuniarto et al., 2024). For Christians in Indonesia, living in a pluralistic society is not simply an empirical fact, or a political by-product of citizenship; it is a profound and divinely ordained vocation of faith, grounded in the conviction of God's sovereignty in the nation's history (Arifianto et al., 2021; Bulan & Manik, 2024; Limpele, 2023). For this reason, diversity is viewed as a "precious gift" from God and fosters a distinctively Indonesian society of tolerance and moral strength (Amin & Ritonga, 2024; Batubara et al., 2025; Rantung, 2024; (Amin & Ritonga, 2024; Batubara et al., 2025; Ritonga et al., 2023; Ruhulessin & Parihala, 2021).

Christian diversity engagement in Indonesia is grounded in the belief that God, the Creator, appreciates diversity (similar to the CREATION theory). Each person is created differently (Imago Dei) and, therefore, should be treated with dignity, regardless of their religious or ethnic background (Mufanebadza & Masengwe, 2025; Müller, 2020; Sonessa, 2021; Szczerba, 2020; Umbrello & O'Hara, 2025). Thus, Limpele (2023), Pranoto (2024), and others observe the importance of the Christian vocation in calling Christians to be the 'Salt and Light' in plural contexts, identifying the call to participate in the nation-building process, and the constructive role of upholding peace in reflecting Jesus' love. Thus, the balance between faith and citizenship is important in Indonesia's religious plurality and in the five basic principles of the Indonesian State (i.e., Pancasila), which is a religiously neutral document (Steven & Purba, 2024).

Jürgen Moltmann's social doctrine of the Trinity provides a solid theological foundation for understanding diversity as a divine gift. The unity of the Triune God does not eliminate distinction among the divine persons, but rather it demonstrates how difference and communion can coexist harmoniously. This theological vision supports Indonesia's commitment to unity in diversity and offers a Christian rationale for religious moderation and social cohesion (Moltmann, 1993). Volf's theology of embrace provides a strong framework for religious moderation in Indonesia. He argues that Christian faith requires openness to the "other" while maintaining one's own identity. Through the concept of embrace, Christians are called to move beyond exclusion and hostility toward reconciliation and mutual respect. Such a perspective resonates strongly with Pancasila's commitment to unity amid religious diversity (Volf, 1996). Volf thus argues that Christian identity is strengthened rather than weakened through openness to others. Similarly, Lesslie Newbigin's missiological engagement with religious pluralism insists on confessional distinctiveness while remaining genuinely open to dialogue, rejecting both relativism and exclusivism as inadequate responses to the multi-religious world (Newbigin, 1989).

Historical accounts show that Christians were, and remain, integral to the formation and construction of Indonesia's national identity. For example, Alexander Andries Maramis, a member of the Committee of Nine (Panitia Sembilan), and Johannes Leimena, a central figure in nationalist politics, embody how Christian moral ethos can be integrated with Pancasila (Heydemans & Langi, 2020; Ngesthi et al., 2023; Suluh et al., 2024). The removal of the 'seven words' from the Jakarta Charter on 18 August 1945, well documented in Aritonang and Steenbrink's (2008) comprehensive historical account, shows that Christian leaders and other national figures of the time prioritised national cohesion over sectarian interests (Bourchier, 2019; Zhang, 2025). Given recent attempts to diminish the role of Christian leaders in the de facto founding of Indonesia, it is important to understand this history (Suluh et al., 2024). With Pancasila, it becomes a Theology

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of Nationalism, and therefore, 'civic transcendence' is the term to use, meaning it is an obligation of all devotees, regardless of Religion, to protect and serve the country (Taneo, 2025).

This study aims to enhance both the theoretical and applied discussions of the relationship between Christian theology and religious moderation in Indonesia (Fauzan et al., 2024). The author attempts to respond to the latest Religious Harmony Index (Indeks Kerukunan Umat Beragama, KUB) and analyse social phenomena during 2024–2025 (Budiyono, 2025) to evaluate interreligious peace and its social developments. The author situates the government's religious moderation policies within an administrative process rather than a divinely formulated, educationally transmitted theological process (churches and schools) (Nasution et al., 2024; Nasution et al., 2025; Nasution et al.,2026). This study, through literature review and in-depth analysis, seeks to foster a tolerant ecosystem in which diversity drives a just and unified nation.

Literature Review

Research on Christian theology in conjunction with Indonesia's pluralism and the state ideology of Pancasila has produced a significant and developing body of work. This literature review charts the course of academic discourse on religious pluralism, religious moderation, and the socio-political and theological convergence in Indonesia. However, existing scholarship has not sufficiently examined the convergence of these three domains — Christian theology, Pancasila ideology, and the practice of religious moderation — as a unified theological framework grounded in both biblical doctrine and civic responsibility. This study addresses that gap by proposing a model of theologically motivated civic engagement that integrates Christian vocation with the Indonesian State's pluralistic framework.

Christian Theology and Pluralism in Indonesia

Religious pluralism poses problems for Christianity's theology because the religions it accommodates contradict and conflict with the core Christian belief that Christ is the singular way to truth. Conservative Christian theologians have largely adopted exclusivism. They believe that a pluralistic understanding of the world's religions can be legitimate, but, from their perspective, salvation can be found in Christ, and no other religious understandings can be legitimate. Other theologians, however, have developed an understanding that embraces radical Inclusivism, explaining that while Christ's uniqueness is maintained, God's salvific work is fully operative in other religions (Cohn-Sherbok, 1994; Hick, 2001). Of course, this shift does not disregard the need for other religions to be understood on their own terms, while keeping in mind the focus on justice, which, in Christian and Western terms, may be more difficult to achieve. This focus centres on Christian theology and leaves out the salvific work God is doing in other religions, as expressed by Christ Hariyanto (2025), Labobar et al. (2025), and Winardi (2021).

The multi-religious world is a challenge for the Christian mission and community, and of course, Christian pluralism can, and more often than not, lead towards relativism and/or syncretism. This is, of course, an impediment to Christian community; in this regard, the community, not the faith, must be the focus, and the Christian community must engage meaningfully, but strategically, in community-building, out of love and in truth (Adarigho, 2023; Asadu et al., 2020). The various responses of the Christian community may best be summarised as exclusivists and inclusivists, with many in between, all the while seeking to reconcile the conflicting claims of religions with the absolute truth of the Christian faith (Silaban et al., 2024; Widiyaningtyas et al., 2025).

As an opportunity for the Church to enact its mission of peace and reconciliation, Indonesian scholars view religious pluralism as an opportunity rather than a threat. They have constructed

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both contextual and dialogical theological frameworks. According to the frameworks, the Church should foster and constructively engage in interfaith dialogue, cooperation, and social constructiveness within a pluralistic society while maintaining biblical integrity (Labobar et al., 2025; Untung et al., 2025). The Church, while fostering inclusively grounded evangelism in the love of Christ, embodies the concept of religious moderation, which helps reduce hostility and fosters clinical social change (Untung et al., 2025). The call to peace, through building empathy and mediating interfaith conflicts, is the role of Christian educators and leaders (Illu et al., 2024). The peace-related missional focus is on dialogue and cooperation with social and humanitarian work, especially in building interfaith constructive relations and breaking down prejudices (Illu et al., 2024). This peace-related focus falls within the broader missional focus on love, justice, and respect for other beliefs, fostering peace, reconciliation, and positive coexistence amid Indonesia's pluralism (Hatmoko, 2023; Widiyaningtyas et al., 2025).

In light of Objantoro's views, there is a broader interest in moving Christian theology away from exclusive approaches towards more interfaith approaches while maintaining some degree of confessional distinctiveness (Objantoro, 2018). This approach to Indonesia's pluralistic reality understands religious diversity not as an obstacle to evangelism but as a means of expressing the love of God through social responsibility (diakonia), while balancing one's theological stance with civic engagement (Pranoto, 2024; Widiyaningtyas et al., 2025). Further, biblical inclusive theology, which inter alia draws on Acts 10:12-16, supports this by acknowledging the unique position of Christ whilst still 'leaving the door open' to the Christian community, thereby enhancing possibilities for inter-religious conversations (Sitio et al., 2025). Increasingly, Indonesian Christian thought is integrating social justice and peacebuilding inclusivism with active love, advocating the recognition of differences whilst also emphasising restoration (Pranoto, 2024; Untung et al., 2025; Widiyaningtyas et al., 2025). This methodology, grounded in Contextual Christology, uses Christ to build understanding and collaboration across religious boundaries without losing crucial elements of the faith (Cyntia & Bahar, 2025; Yankyera et al., 2024). This broad outline encourages the Church to engage with religious plurality through respectful dialogue, constructive service, and respectful engagement grounded in the Church's theological commitments (Hariyanto, 2025; Untung et al., 2025).

Christian Religious Education (CRE) has begun implementing religious moderation literacy to nurture a theologically sound yet socially accommodating Christian self-understanding in support of pluralism. CRE seeks to transcend the teaching of a single religious doctrine by developing students' character and civic and ethical skills, enabling them to live peacefully in a multi-religious context (Balyo et al., 2025; Rantung, 2024). The incorporation of the four pillars of religious moderation—nationalism, tolerance, non-violence, and acceptance of local customs—into educational syllabi is a practical means of fostering social cohesion and harmony among different religious communities (Allo et al., 2023). The approach is also useful in preventing radicalism, as it seeks to internalise values that go beyond orthodox humanitarianism (Balyo et al., 2025; Waruwu & Diantiwati, 2025). Christian educational leadership, in particular, is important in developing students' attitudes of tolerance, respect, and a shared vision to maintain the nation's cohesiveness (Saogo & Rohi, 2025). The congruence between the CRE and the Pancasila ideology of the State also indicates a growing tendency among scholars to situate theological education within a pluralistic democracy to maintain peaceful coexistence among religions in Indonesia (et al., 2024; Sianipar & Kolibu, 2025).

Pancasila as a Theology of Harmony

Discourse on "Pancasila Theology" integrates Pancasila as the initial political, cultural, and religious consensus, and as such is non-negotiable. Pancasila maintains religious plurality as a

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national identity to be engaged with and tolerated. In deep engagements, Christian beliefs such as agape (love), justice, and forgiveness intersect with the principles of Pancasila (Islamy, 2022; Sulbi & Siregar, 2021). "Belief in the One and only God," as Pancasila's first precept, is a positive theological touchstone to help people of all religions engage with one another and avoid exclusivism (Hanock et al., 2021). Pancasila is a religiously moderate document, as it includes, among other things, tolerance, anti-radicalism, commitment to the nation, and respect for local wisdom. In all these aspects, Pancasila promotes pluralism and social justice in Indonesian religious life (Islamy, 2022). By encouraging acceptance of differences and open dialogue, Pancasila and Christian theology promote peace and unity in the nation (Fitria & Tanggok, 2020; Sulbi & Siregar, 2021). The fusion of Christian theology with Pancasila is a deep synthesis that honours both confessional identity and democracy in all its pluralism (Bulo et al., 2021; Dawani et al., 2024). The main inferences of this synthesis are threefold. First, Indonesian Christians are not required to choose between confessional fidelity and civic loyalty, as the two are theologically compatible within the Pancasila framework. Second, Christian engagement with the State is not a form of capitulation to secularism but a biblically mandated participation in the governance of creation. Third, the Pancasila framework provides a civic-theological space within which the Church can pursue its prophetic and diaconal mission without theological compromise.

In the context of the Pancasila framework, the theology of interreligious peace suggests that, in this case, nationalism is a responsibility of the Christian moral code, where loyalty to the country is not at odds with one's religious beliefs. This perspective is inspired by the biblical texts of Romans 13, which supports obedience to the rulers, seeing this as part of God's order, and Matthew 22:37–40, which speaks of the commandment to love one's neighbour and includes this as loving a country, and hence, a call to patriotism (Mulyatno, 2022). This is why Christian theologians in Indonesia, such as Mulyatno (2022), Hamadi (2025), and Lumintang (2021), are interested in pursuing a contextual theology that enables the biblical and the constitutional to cohere, upholding the pluriformity of confessional democracy and patriotic citizenship in a plural society. Pancasila's principles, especially religious tolerance, social justice, and mutual respect, serve as the basic ethical foundations for interreligious dialogue and collaboration, thereby alleviating religious strife and enhancing social solidarity (Nurdianzah et al., 2024; Putri et al., 2025). The fusion of theology and Pancasila has inspired a citizenship that goes beyond religious exclusivism and, in a sense, incorporates the values of compassion, justice, and responsibility among diverse religious entities. This has also been part of the ongoing dynamic in Indonesian academia to marry the religious doctrines with the country's plural socio-political framework to achieve social peace (Nendissa et al., 2025; Ulum & Mawardi, 2025).

Internalisation of the Religious Moderation Policy

The regulation of religious moderation in Indonesia's policies has been continuously strengthened through its inclusion in the Indonesian National Medium-Term Development Plan for 2020-2024. In simple terms, moderation is understood as a balanced approach, and extremism of any form should be rejected while upholding the integrity and dignity of the person as the primary ethical foundation (Qoumas et al., 2024). Regarding this developing policy, several Protestant and Catholic Churches in Indonesia, the Commissions of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), and the Indonesian Bishops' Conference (KWI) have expressed support for the integration of moderation as a way of constituting the elements of Nationalism and the Act of Citizenship (Mahamboro, 2019).

Christian communities seek to internalise the values of moderation through various activities, such as organised interreligious dialogue, the cooperative use of places of worship, and the inclusion of moderation in theological teaching (Layan, 2022; Tahalele et al., 2024; Waruwu & Diantiwati,

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2025). Recent studies indicate that the Church plays an important role in fostering unity among Christians and, more importantly, in bridging gaps between faiths to address pressing global issues, including humanitarian and environmental concerns (Magezi, 2024; Sarimbangun & Talumepa, 2025). It is suggested that, as part of ecumenical movements, churches should take the initiative to act beyond creed to reduce the socio-economic inequalities that often cause inter-religious conflict (Karttunen, 2025). Overall, these factors contextualise the fact that religious moderation in Indonesia is not simply a result of the State's goals, but also a contemporary Christian practice that holds it as a theological and institutional imperative. Yet the complexities of internalisation should not be minimised: there is a persistent tension between moderation as state policy and moderation as theological conviction, and the Church must guard against reducing its prophetic witness to bureaucratic compliance.

Method

A library-based approach to qualitative research has been used in this study. Such an approach enables in-depth analysis of theological arguments and public policy frameworks through document analysis. Thus, qualitative document analysis was informed by theological hermeneutics and historical interpretation. The study does not use fieldwork and relies primarily on descriptive and analytical interpretations of the texts to address the problem and develop the explanatory theory.

Data Collection

A diverse collection of data has been used in this study. These include biblical texts, constitutions (Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution), government regulations (presidential regulations and ministerial decrees of the Ministry of Religious Affairs), theological monographs, journal articles, and national surveys, including the Indeks Kerukunan Umat Beragama (Religious Harmony Index).

Source Classification

The documents collected were classified as either primary sources or secondary sources. Primary sources include the Bible, foundational constitutions (Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution), and the official statistical data of the 2024–2025 Religious Harmony Index published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Secondary sources include peer-reviewed religious journals, research and academic books, independent institution research reports, policy analysis, and related bibliographies.

Content Analysis

The research uses qualitative content analysis to develop systematic conclusions about theological and legal documents. This involves close readings, thematic coding, and deliberative categorisation to identify patterns in themes such as "universal love," "social justice," and "religious moderation." This process shows how theological claims relate to discourses in constitution and policy.

Analytical Approaches

The research uses several alternative complementary methods. A deductive method is used to interpret general biblical principles, especially those relating to love and justice, in light of the pluralism of Indonesian society. An inductive approach is utilised in the analysis of documented

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cases and national surveys to derive broader conceptual frameworks for implementing religious moderation. Finally, a historical method is used to contextualise contemporary discourse on religious moderation within the broader national development of the Indonesian State by analysing the contributions of Christian leaders during the early years of the Indonesian State.

Validity and Reliability

Analytical rigour is supplemented by source triangulation, in which official government publications are compared with independent research (e.g., reports from civil society organisations and national commissions). This process improves interpretive credibility and reduces normative bias. In total, the methodological approach aims to provide a holistic synthesis that integrates normative theological reflection and empirical socio-political realities in present-day Indonesia.

Results and Discussion

Theological Foundation: Diversity as a Mandate of Creation and Love

Analysing primary data alongside pertinent literature offers insight into the integration of Christian faith within Indonesia's ideological and socio-political framework. The available reports do not suggest that theology and the national ideology are separate constructs; rather, there appears to be a continuous process of negotiation, contextualisation, and reinterpretation between them. The following sections explore the theological, historical, and sociological dimensions of the question. The analytical depth gained from these multiple levels enables a thorough understanding of the engagement between Christian thought and Pancasila, national identity, and the discourse of religious moderation in Indonesia today.

In Christian theology, Indonesia's sociopolitical pluralism is a reality of the divine order. It is not viewed as a façade of the social construct. Instead, it is regarded as part of God's creation (Mulyatno, 2022; Saogo & Rohi, 2025). The created order of God is, in fact, a positive existence, not a negative façade of a social arrangement. It is a reason for religious and cultural plurality to create a wider theological horizon for practising mandated openness, empathy, and responsible coexistence.

This argument is based on three principal theological foundations.

The first is the theology of universal love (agape). Jesus' teaching in Matthew 22:37-40 about loving God also stresses loving your neighbour as yourself. In Indonesia, the term 'neighbour' includes everyone, regardless of Religion. Mufanebadza & Masengwe (2025); Sonessa (2021); Szczerba (2020) argue that Christian love is not sentimental; it is an ethical responsibility that includes every person as an imago Dei. From this perspective, dismissal of diversity is tantamount to dismissing God's plurality in creation (Riadi et al., 2024; Widiyaningtyas et al., 2025).

The second is the theology of the body as unity. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul uses the body metaphor, in which there are different and interdependent parts (Carter, 2009; Prakosa, 2025). This is a useful ecclesiology for interpreting Indonesia's plural society. Ethnic, religious, and cultural differences can be seen as different parts or members whose welfare is interdependent (Saputra & Nasution, 2026). This theological perspective shifts the focus away from sectarianism and self-centredness, encouraging Christians to pursue the bonum commune in the nation—the Third Vocation of being salt and light. Matthew 5:13-16 refers to Christians as a rod to society or as salt and light to society. In Indonesia's pluralistic context, being 'rod' involves participating in justice,

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peace, and social integrity. 'Salt' is a moral positive contribution and a shield against decay, while 'light' serves as an example and an activist for the public (Rahmadi et al., 2024). Data from this biblical command is, to a great extent, present in Christian Indonesian circles and is understood as a theological imperative for advocating tempered Religion and peace in Religion. These different theologies show that engagement with pluralism is not an external capitulation to socio-political exigencies, but a constitutive part of the Christian moral and ecclesial character in Indonesia.

This study highlights the convergence of Pancasila principles and certain biblical teachings. Instead of seeing Pancasila as a secular ideology antagonistic to Christianity, several Indonesian Christians view it as a legislative document whose religious truths shape the relationship between Religion and the State (Hamadi, 2025). What some describe as harmonisation is not seen as a theological reduction but as an interpretive alignment of normative biblical ethics with the Indonesian State, such as justice and human dignity. Pancasila is not viewed as a strong competitor, but as a civic space for religious communities to hold democratic and pluralistic convictions.

This shows that the relationship between Christianity and Pancasila is more a dialogical integration than an ideological conflict, indicating a contextual theological stance shaped by Indonesia's unique historical and sociopolitical context.

The Principles of Pancasila	Christian Theological Reflection	Biblical Foundation
Belief in the one and only God	Recognition of God as the source of life and universal truth.	Exodus 20:2-3; Deuteronomy 6:4
Just and civilised humanity	Respect for human dignity without looking at the face.	Matthew 22:39; Romans 2:11
The unity of Indonesia	A call to live in peace and be of one mind in love.	John 17:21; Philippians 2:2
Democracy Led by Wisdom...	Leadership that serves with wisdom from God.	Matthew 20:26-28; James 1:5
Social Justice for All People	The struggle for the oppressed and the distribution of welfare.	Amos 5:24; Galatians 6:9

Table 1. Convergence between Pancasila Principles and Christian Theological Foundations
Source: Author, 2026

The degree of alignment in the synchronisation table between the ideological principles of Pancasila and Christian values demonstrates a significant congruence between the theologically oriented fundamental principles of the Indonesian State and the primary doctrinal values of Christianity. This also suggests that the majority of the Indonesian Christian community views

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Pancasila not as an ideology that rivals religious doctrine. Rather, it is considered a theologically neutral ethical and political doctrine in which religiously inspired acts reflecting the people's values can be positive. Thus, Pancasila is a singular political-civic ideology that serves an integrative purpose, acting as a mediator between religious and pluralistic sociological frameworks, and enabling the Christian community to practice its faith without being unpatriotic.

The first principle, Belief in the One and Only God (Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa), is similar to the Christian confession of God as the source of life, truth, and ultimate ethical authority. This principle is Christian monotheism and traces God's public life. This is not to say, however, that this is an exclusivist claim. It is a constitutionally inclusive claim that allows for the expression of a wide range of religious beliefs within the national context. It is the first principle that establishes a relationship between faith and the State while ensuring the absence of religious hegemony (Hamadi, 2025; Ropi, 2017).

The second principle, Just and Civilised Humanity (Kemanusiaan yang Adil dan Beradab), presents a Christian ethical approach to the dignity of humanity. In Christian theology, people are treated equally by God and, therefore, possess value. This is frequently derived from the doctrine of the imago Dei (Mufanebadza & Masengwe, 2025; Szczerba, 2020). From this angle, discrimination, injustices, and violent acts contradict vital theological commitments. Thus, the analysis shows that the embedded humanitarian spirit of Pancasila is not merely a matter of law but also has a theological dimension that stimulates Christian participation in advocating for human rights and social justice in public space (Lumintang, 2021).

The third principle, The Unity of Indonesia (Persatuan Indonesia), is also considered a patriotic duty to ensure the nation's continuity and cohesion amid diversity. Christian theology views the concept of unity not as a state of sameness but of relational solidarity in love, reconciliation, and respect. Therefore, national unity is considered a true manifestation of faith in the pluralistic social framework. This is how the analysis views the integration of nationalism and Religion as a potential source of opposing loyalties. Moreover, it considers them as interlocking facets of Christian citizenship, aimed at preserving peace and order in society and in the polity (Renwarin, 2020; Ruhulessin & Parihala, 2021).

The fourth principle of Pancasila, which states, "Democracy Is Guided by the Inner Wisdom of Deliberation/Representation," can be compared to the Christian understanding of servant leadership, as it emphasises leadership as a calling to serve rather than to dominate or control. The example of Christian servant leadership draws on Jesus Christ. It emphasises the attributes of humility, love, and sacrifice, as well as moral responsibility to the led, and wisdom as the ability to see and discern things from a spiritual rather than a politically or strategically partisan perspective (Pasaribu et al., 2023; Sanderan, 2021; Saogo & Rohi, 2025). This constructs an understanding of democracy as more than a procedural system; it is an ethical system that requires it to be practised with integrity, justice, and accountability by leaders and the citizenry alike. Servant leaders provide for the good of the community while also leading its members through faith and obedience to God's will (Du Plessis & Nkambule, 2020; Saogo et al., 2025). The responsibility of Christian leaders is to be the organisers of a relationally integrated community, and the community is to serve the community (Waruwu & Zega, 2023). It can be concluded that the democratic principle of Pancasila aligns with the Christian expectation or calling for leaders to serve selflessly and with moral wisdom, championing justice and responsible leadership.

Pancasila's fifth principle, Social Justice for All Indonesian People, resonates with Christian doctrines that speak of a preferential option for the poor. In Christian social ethics, justice is more than a legal concept. It includes advocacy for those who are disadvantaged due to the social

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structures in place. In this sense, justice is more than the State's policy goal; it is a call to the faithful to engage in social activism. Hence, both Pancasila and Christianity use the social justice framework to challenge systemic inequities and to call for a balanced, responsible socio-economic distribution of resources as a form of social love (Irawati, 2024; Manuahe et al., 2025; Pardede et al., 2023).

The combined harmonisation of Pancasila and Christianity suggests an understanding that is more cooperative than conflicting. While Pancasila offers a framework of civic ethics for society as a whole, Christian theology provides the inspiration and moral justification for putting it into practice. This understanding reinforces the idea that Pancasila is a lived and situational ideology that constructively harmonises Religion with the democratic, just, and peacebuilding socio-religious framework of Indonesia's plural society (Natalia et al., 2024; Ngesthi et al., 2023; Taneo, 2025).

Considering each of the five principles individually, the interdependent dimensions of each principle can be applied to different theologies: the monotheistic God of the principle of divinity can be viewed as the Christian confession of sovereignty, while the principle of humanitarian concerns with just and civil humanity can be viewed as the command to love one's neighbour, just as national unity embraces the biblical hope for a reconciled community; on the other hand, the principle of democracy and deliberation can be compared to the model of democracy; and on the other hand, the principle of social justice can be compared to the social justice advocacy of the prophetic and diaconal tradition of the vulnerable. These interpretive parallels do not conflate or reduce Religion to state ideology, but rather demonstrate how religious narratives can inform us about civic virtue while remaining committed to pluralism (Hamadi, 2025; Lumintang, 2021).

The Contribution of Christian Leaders to Indonesia's Constitutional History

The establishment of the Indonesian State exemplifies the involvement of Christian figures in the nationalist Christian movement. This involvement is illustrated by the case of Alexander Andries (A.A.) Maramis, who was part of the Committee of Nine (Panitia Sembilan) in the Investigative Committee of the BPUPK. Maramis was one of the many co-authors of the Jakarta Charter, which became the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution (Heydemans & Langi, 2020). This provided representation for the Christian and other minority communities when the State's founding principles were being established. Decades later, in 1976, Maramis was also a member of the 'Committee of Five' (Panitia Lima) alongside Mohammad Hatta, which was tasked with writing the historical roots of Pancasila, and this appointment was seen as a testament to the value and merit of his contribution to the legal history of the nation (Aritonang & Steenbrink, 2008).

Another notable individual was Johannes Leimena, a Christian leader from Maluku and a central figure in the Partai Kristen Indonesia (Parkindo). Leimena had a considerable impact through both diplomatic and political activities and served in 18 cabinets during the Sukarno era, making him one of the longest-serving ministers in Indonesian history. His leadership was instrumental in mobilising Christian constituencies, especially the Jong Ambon network, during the Republic's support when its future was uncertain. His support of the ecumenical movement was also notable, and he was one of the founders of the Indonesian Christian Student Movement (GMKI) and held the view that active and responsible Christian discipleship (Aritonang & Steenbrink, 2008) also meant being a responsible citizen.

The involvement of these individuals in critical moments of constitutional development, in particular, the discussions concerning the removal of the "seven words" from the Jakarta Charter on 18 August 1945, exemplifies the first recorded case of religious moderation during Indonesia's

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formative years. The revision was undertaken to ensure the country's integrity as a whole and to avoid dissolution, particularly in the East Indonesian regions, where concerns about religious particularism were strong. From this angle, the dedication of Christian leaders to a Pancasila state can be appreciated less as a matter of political expediency and more as an optimistic, constructive cause for a religiously plural Indonesia (Aritonang & Steenbrink, 2008).

The Dynamics of Tolerance and the Religious Harmony Index (2024-2025)

The most recent empirical evidence on Indonesia's interfaith relations and harmony shows both cautious optimism and cause for concern. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has published the KUB (Kerukunan Umat Beragama) or national Religious Harmony Index scores for 2024 and 2025, identifying changes in public perceptions of tolerance, equity, and collaborative action across all religions. The figures are recorded as follows:

Year	KUB Index Score	Status	Information
2015	75,36	High	------
2020	67,46	Medium	Lowest decline in 10 years (Impact of polarisation/pandemic)
2023	76,02	High	Recovery after massive moderation policies
2024	76,47	High	National stabilisation
2025	77,89	High	Highest score in the last 11 years

Table 2. Development of the Religious Harmony Index (KUB) in Indonesia (2015–2025)
Source: Budiyono, 2025

Three main dimensions can explain the KUB 2025 score of 77.89. The tolerance dimension (88.82) indicates a high level of mutual respect among religious communities. The equality dimension (79.35) is triggered by the citizenry's perception that all persons are equal and have the same rights and obligations before the law, irrespective of their religious affiliation. On the other hand, the togetherness dimension (65.49) is comparatively the lowest. This depicts a high level of attitudinal tolerance, but social cooperation across communities and sustained interreligious collaboration is lacking. This gap draws a distinction between acceptance and inclusion and highlights the disparity between normative and behavioural acceptance.

The government also published the Religious Piety Index (Indeks Kesalehan Umat Beragama, IKsUB) alongside the KUB, which shows a high level of 84.61. This value indicates a high level of piety at both the individual and community levels. The systematic religious moderation policy, inclusive regulation of places of worship, and the use of religious days to promote interfaith have contributed to the increase of this index, the level of piety. The high religiosity and the interreligious interaction gap are evident when this score is compared with the KUB togetherness dimension score, which scored the lowest score.

While there is a general sense of progress based on statistical data, the empirical evidence suggests otherwise. The Komnas Perempuan recorded several notable instances of intolerance

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towards religions, including the harassment of worshippers of the Gereja Kristen Setia Indonesia (GKSI) in Padang at a prayer house. Such incidents typically arise from disputes over permits for houses of worship. Local misunderstandings are often left unaddressed by the local authorities. This is why some people refer to "procedural tolerance": the promises of national policies, including commitments, are not fully implemented on the ground.

Good Practices in Interreligious Harmony: The Cases of Medan, Kupang, and Manado

Despite the many obstacles that these cities have encountered, some have successfully developed models of religious moderation. For example, Medan has achieved the most notable improvement in the SETARA Institute's Tolerant City Index (Indeks Kota Toleran, IKT). Medan went from ranking 88th in 2022 to 47th in 2024. This improvement has been linked to the city's inclusive policies. The city's Mayor Regulation No. 28/2021, which sets out guidelines for managing religious life, and the city's proportional budgetary support for the Interreligious Harmony Forum (FKUB) and religious communities. This form of institutional support illustrates how local governance can operationalise the moderation discourse they receive from the national level.

Cities	Key Initiatives	Social Impact
Medan	Mayoral Regulation No. 28/2021 & Policy Inclusivity	Significant increase in ICT ranking; strengthening of harmonious governance.
Kupang	IAKN Religious Moderation Expo	Building harmony through arts and culture and student involvement.
Manado	Synergy of Religion and Local Culture	Creating a stable and sustainable ecosystem of tolerance.

Table 3. Comparative Overview of Local Initiatives for Religious Moderation in Indonesia
Source: Author, 2026

Kupang likewise presents an instructive case through the active involvement of religious higher education institutions. The State Christian Institute (IAKN) Kupang organised the 2025 Religious Moderation Expo, incorporating interfaith cultural arts as a medium for nurturing pluralism. Through these initiatives, students and faculty are encouraged to function as agents of moderation in schools and broader society, integrating inclusive Christian ethics with civic engagement. Experiences in Kupang and Manado further illustrate how local wisdom, when synergised with religious values, can serve as a resilient counterbalance to radicalism and sectarian polarisation. Taken together, these findings suggest that the effectiveness of religious moderation in Indonesia is contingent not merely on national policy design, but also on local institutional capacity, civic participation, and the translation of normative commitments into sustained social interaction.

Religious Moderation as a Christian Theological Responsibility

The Indonesian State has implemented several regulations, including Ministerial Decree (KMA) No. 93/2020, which defines religious moderation as a tool for fostering social cohesion. Nonetheless, among Christian communities, moderation is not simply a matter of obedience to the State; more often than not, it is recast as a Christian virtue that encompasses a moral

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obligation to the nation. Such interpretations of moderation are more than administrative; they are more theological than anything else.

This theological reading of moderation is pronounced in Christian rhetoric, which is typically organised around four key themes. The first is the expression of nationalism, in which moderation requires embracing Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution as valid civic documents within the framework of Christian doctrine. This is often the case among those who hold the biblical doctrine of obedience to rulers for the common good. The second is tolerance, which, in this case, is regarded as a form of Christian love that grants others the freedom to hold and practise diverse religious beliefs without interference. It should be noted that while the practice of tolerance is often framed in terms of relative faith commitments, it aims to strengthen faith through respectful, pluralistic religious discourse.

Non-violence constitutes one of the four pillars of religious moderation in Indonesia and carries a specifically theological weight for the Christian community. From a biblical perspective, the call to peacemaking (Matthew 5:9) and the apostolic instruction to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21) provide the doctrinal foundation for the Church's rejection of physical coercion or symbolic aggression in religious discourse. This commitment is not merely a civic concession but a constitutive dimension of Christian discipleship: to follow Christ is to renounce domination and to pursue reconciliation. In the Indonesian context, this means that Christian communities are called to resist both violent extremism and the subtler forms of religious intimidation, advocating instead for legal protection, dialogue, and restorative justice as the proper instruments of social transformation.

The fourth pillar, acceptance of local wisdom (kearifan lokal), resonates with the theological principle of contextualisation or inculturation, which holds that the Gospel must be proclaimed and embodied within, and not against, the cultural forms of a given community. Indonesian Christian theology has long engaged with local traditions, particularly in regions such as Maluku, Nusa Tenggara Timur, and Batak communities in Sumatra, where indigenous cultural practices have been integrated into Christian worship and community life. This integration does not represent a theological compromise; rather, it reflects the conviction that the Gospel is trans-cultural and capable of taking root in any human soil. When the Church embraces local cultural wisdom, it simultaneously affirms human dignity, builds bridges with neighbouring communities of other faiths, and strengthens the social fabric of the nation.

Conclusion

Pluralism in Indonesia reflects the Christian vocation, anchored in the theology of love, the dignity of every person, and the call for oneness in the nation. As such, the religious and cultural plurality in Indonesia is not seen as a socio-political problem, but rather as a socio-moral and spiritual opportunity. The merger of Christian teachings and the Pancasila ideology provides a basis for Christians to embrace dual citizenship as faithful members of the Republic and as loyal members of their respective religious communities, without any theological conflict. In addition, the role of Christian leaders in the development of the Indonesian State continues to validate the argument that the Christian presence in the Indonesian nation is a reality that cannot be ignored.

Although the national statistics for 2025 show signs of improvement for inter-religious relations, there are still problems on the ground. Case studies of religious intolerance and the low degree of "inter-religious togetherness" as a constituent of harmony measures show a disparity that exists between normative acceptance and actual inter-communal relations. This suggests that a positive attitude alone towards religious diversity is not sufficient for social cohesion. What is necessary

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is for people to actively and interactively engage with others outside their religious group as this promotes needed harmony in society. Thus, religious moderation, as practised in schools and churches, is an important means of reducing the likelihood of conflict and fostering constructive cohabitation in a democracy. The positive changes observed in places like Medan and Kupang also support the hypothesis that the combination of inclusive public theology and ecclesiastical activism can foster a milieu of inter-religious harmony.

The results of this study also encourage promoting the "togetherness" dimension, particularly in economic and environmental cross-religious collaboration. Promoting literacy in religious moderation is also important for constructing the "new" ethical imagination of future generations of Indonesians, one that integrates pluralism. Within the public arena of a plural society, the Christian calling in Indonesia is to embody peace, justice, and solidarity in the practice of the faith, thereby demonstrating the theological stance in the social order.

Limitations: This study acknowledges two primary limitations. First, as a library-based qualitative study, it relies on documented textual sources and cannot claim to capture the lived religious experience of Indonesian Christians on the ground. Second, the analysis primarily focuses on Protestant and Catholic Christian perspectives and does not fully represent the diversity of Christian denominations in Indonesia, some of which hold significantly different positions on pluralism and moderation.

Future Research: Future research could productively employ ethnographic or mixed-methods approaches to examine how ordinary Indonesian Christians navigate the tension between theological conviction and civic duty in their daily lives. Additionally, comparative studies examining the role of Christian communities in religious moderation across other ASEAN nations with significant Christian minorities — such as the Philippines, East Timor, and Papua New Guinea — would extend the scholarly conversation initiated by this study.

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