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## Plurality Of Religion In Christian Views And The Implications For Christian Religious Education

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### **Abstract**

*This article aims to describe the plurality of religions in the Christian view and how they are implicated in Christian Religious Education. The method used is quantitative description, where the authors collect material from various sources of writing that relate to religious plurality and Christian views view it. The result of this writing is the discovery of the first theocentric approach, namely religions that exist in a shared environment and life that all come from one common root or ancestor, and from the same God. Second, christocentric, which prioritizes the discussion of the relationship of Christianity with plurality or other religions by highlighting Jesus as a measure. The implication is first the curriculum and specifically the material or teaching material needs to be adapted to the context. Second, the speakers as resource persons, whoever they are, who are involved in the teaching of PAK, need to have at least adequate knowledge, insights and skills about the condition of plural religious communities and pluralism into general principles and characters.*

*Keywords: plurality, religion, christian religious education*

### **Abstrak**

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk memaparkan pluralitas agama dalam pandangan Kristen serta bagaimana implikasinya bagi Pendidikan Agama Kristen. Metode yang digunakan adalah kuantitatif deskripsi, dimana penulis mengumpulkan materi dari pelbagai sumber penulisan yang berhubungan dengan pluralitas agama dan pandangan-pandangan Kristen memandangnya. Hasil dari penulisan ini adalah ditemukannya pendekatan pertama teosentris, yaitu agama-agama yang ada berada pada satu lingkungan dan kehidupan bersama yang semuanya berasal dari satu akar atau leluhur bersama, dan dari Tuhan yang sama. Kedua, kristosentris, yang mengutamakan pembahasan hubungan kekristenan dengan pluralitas atau agama-agama lain dengan menonjolkan Yesus sebagai ukuran. Implikasinya adalah pertama kurikulum dan khususnya materi atau bahan ajar perlu disesuaikan dengan konteks tersebut. Kedua, para naradidik sebagai narasumber, siapapun mereka, yang terlibat dalam pengajaran PAK, perlu memiliki pengetahuan, wawasan dan keterampilan yang minimal memadai tentang kondisi plural agama masyarakat dan pluralisme menjadi prinsip dan karakter umum.

Kata kunci: pluralitas, agama, pendidikan agama Kristen

### **INTRODUCTION**

At present, there is no longer a place and community that does not encounter encounters with cultural elements, including religion, from other places and

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communities; or even those that are not touched and affected by these other elements. The presence of other religions in a society has produced religious diversity or plurality. Nations or societies that were once homogeneous in religion have become heterogeneous. For example, the nations and cultures of Asia and Africa that were entered by Western nations and cultures, including Christianity, in the era of colonialism and the spread of Christianity in the 17-20th century; or starting in the mid-19th and 20th centuries, the entry of Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims into the West (Europe and North America). This resulted in a Western-Christian encounter with Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam and made the Western world no longer homogeneous Christian but had become a pluralistic religious society. Cultural plurality, especially religion, has become an absolute reality even within groups of people on this earth. One earth, many religions, that is the title of Paul F. Knitter's book about the plural reality of religions and how the attitudes are displayed towards it; also how dialogue can be carried out as a form of global responsibility for religious communities.<sup>1</sup>

With respect to religious plurality, pluralism is a very important concept and attitude. Religious pluralism here means understanding and appreciation as well as acceptance of the fact that there are other religions that are different from us and that in these religions God expresses himself specifically as well, and therefore in existing religions, people can find Allah and get pleasure, blessing and salvation from Him. In addition to or at the same time, the term tolerance is also often used as an attitude of willingness to accept the fact that there are other different parties around us. Tolerance here contains the meaning of patience, willingness, or resignation. This understanding shows that tolerance is the attitude of accepting a situation that is actually not preferred. There are burdens that are actually unwanted. Therefore, the term tolerance, in the context of religious plurality connotes or has a negative meaning. But tolerance is a positive attitude because it supports harmony and unity and avoids conflict. The term tolerance contains insincerity. This is because basically, the other party is disagreeable, or received with a heavy heart. Therefore, Paul Knitter said that religious tolerance is based on and oriented to views and attitudes that are indifferent to other religious

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<sup>1</sup>Paul F. Knitter, *One Earth, Many Religions: Multifaith Dialogue & Global Responsibility*. New York: Orbis Books, 1995. Knitter is one of many theologians in Christian circles who show a serious and optimistic concern about the issue of pluralism / religious plurality. Other figures are: Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Karl Rahner, W.C. Smith, John Hick, Raimundo Panikkar, M.M. Thomas, Stanley S. Samartha, Leslie Newbigin, and Hans Kung. In Indonesia, known figures are Th. Sumartono, Olaf Schumann and Eka Dharmaputera.

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parties. Indeed, the term tolerance is generally used in a political environment, specifically relating to parties who are distinguished because of the status of the majority or minority, or those in power and those controlled. And because of that, the term tolerance is more suitable to be used in the socio-political world, not in religious matters.<sup>2</sup> As part of religious plurality, Christianity certainly has its views and attitudes towards religious plurality. It certainly has meaning and influence for his life together in society. Below will be discussed Christian views and attitudes towards religious plurality and make it a consideration in the teaching material of Christian Religious Education. The discussion will first show how the Christian scriptures, the Bible, speak of pluralism. This is important because the Bible is the basis and source of Christian faith and teachings.

All teachings that develop among Christians are always based on the Bible. Next, we will discuss religious plurality in the views or discourse of contemporary Christians. This is important to show how Christian figures or theologians (both Catholic and Protestant) understand and react to it. This discussion will show that religious plurality has become an important concern among Christians. The final discussion is about how the reality of religious plurality and the concept of pluralism is taken into consideration and made the main material in the teaching of PAK in educational institutions and the church.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Bible's View of Religious Plurality**

The Bible as a Christian holy book becomes the source of every teaching and practice of the life of its people. The Bible is divided into two parts, the first being called the Old Testament (OT) and the second the New Testament (NT). The Old Testament contains various stories concerning the relationship between God and God, from the first humans to the life history of the nation of Israel which is understood as God's chosen people or nation. The OT mainly contains experiences and reflections on the religious life of the Israelites which began with the history of the first humans and the ancestors of Israel such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, then important figures such as Moses, Joshua, kings and also prophets until the time after the Babylonian exile around

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<sup>2</sup>Therefore also in this paper, tolerance will not be the main focus, but will only be mentioned as needed.

400s BC. In the history of the Israelites, the relationship between God and the people was written, and that the books were also recognized by Jesus as the primary teaching book. For this reason Christians acknowledge the OT also as a holy book. Therefore, the views and attitudes of the Bible regarding pluralism are important to discuss here. The New Testament contains the roots of Christianity that started from the time or by Jesus, which are written in four Gospels (ie Matthew, Mark Luke and John), and the writings of the apostles Paul, Peter and other followers of Jesus. The Gospels contain the words, teachings and deeds of Jesus until he was killed on the cross. The writings of Paul, Peter and other followers contain advice, teachings about Jesus and how to live a true Christian.

As holy books, of course these two books (OT and NT) become the main basis and reference for the views and attitudes of Christians. Therefore, in this chapter, a description of Alkita's views on pluralism and tolerance will be given.

### ***Old Testament***

In the history of the nation of Israel as it is written in the OT, it appears that Israel has lived in a pluralist society. Many other nations and religions coexist with the swans of Israel. The ancestors of the Israelites also experienced encounters with other nations. For example Abraham and his descendants such as Isaac and Jacob. In fact they also had lived in the territory of other nations. The clearest example is Abraham who came out of Ur in the city of Kadim and went on a nomadic life in the area of other nations, until his descendants (ie the twelve tribes of Israel) lived in slavery in Egypt. In Egypt the character of Moses became important because it was he who led the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in the land. The Israelites then lived 40 years on a journey in the wilderness to go and occupy the promised land of Canaan. Under Joshua's leadership, they succeeded in capturing the promised land. Israel became a kingdom with famous kings like David and Solomon. Under the leadership of these kings Israel lived in glory. But their successors lived in such despotism that God punished Israel. The kingdom collapsed and the Israelites were banished to Babylon. But around 200 years later they were released. This event is the end of the story in the OT.<sup>3</sup> In

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<sup>3</sup>Regarding the history of the Israelites, see especially the books of Exodus, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, I & II Chronicles, and some of the Prophets.

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history not recorded in the OT, the Israelites (Jews) were ruled by Greeks and later Romans. During the Roman colonial era, Jesus appeared and worked.

From the experience of the meeting of the Israelites with other nations, the general or dominant attitude is shown is an exclusive and superior attitude. Israel is in a special position, recognized as a chosen nation. As a chosen nation, it is privileged, which is to get God's blessing and protection. It is even used as a channel of blessing for other nations. In this status, the nation of Israel is in a position to judge other nations. However, what was especially criticized were the despotic and hostile nations of Israel. What is criticized is evil or evil, both those of other nations and those of Israel itself. The God of the Israelites is intolerant of the wrongdoers. Other nations, also criticized and despised because they worship idols / baal. Against these nations and wickedness, the nation of Israel was given the task of converting them. The case of Jonah, sent by God to deliver a message to the Ninevites, shows the implementation of the task of bringing salvation to other nations. There is an understanding here that other nations need to be saved; because it is the duty of the prophet-Israel to deliver God's message to them so that they repent.<sup>4</sup> So other nations / religions are seen as unsaved and need to be saved. The plurality of nations / religions here is not understood and responded to as diversity that must be accepted but that must be saved by making different peoples repent and believe in God. The city of Nineveh who later repented, was forgiven and saved by God. But Jonah who was originally given the task of delivering the message to the Ninevites (but defected) became angry or jealous because God freed Nineveh from punishment. Jonah here actually represents the attitude of the Israelites who felt they were chosen and wanted to monopolize God's love for other nations. But God loved the Ninevites, and His love cannot be overcome by Jonah's disappointment. Jonah's story shows that God loves the Gentiles. In the history of the nation of Israel, as an implication of the rejection of plurality and tolerance, there are other nations that are fought and controlled, especially the nations inhabiting areas in Palestine, namely the land promised by God. Nations that were fought for examples of the city of Jericho (Joshua 6), Ai (Joshua 8), the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Feris, Hivites and the Jebusites, Ammonites, etc. (Joshua 9-24). War in the context of the seizure of this domain is not based on the rejection of the existence of these nations because they worship other

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<sup>4</sup>See Jonah's story in the Bible, the book of Jonah.

gods, so not because of anti-pluralism, but because other nations inhabit the land promised and given by God. To measure the land, the Israelites must wage war.

In other words, warfare waged against other nations is not because of religious differences but because of God's promise to give the land.<sup>5</sup> However, there is a different view from the above, namely the recognition of authority, the protection of God and the appointment by God of other nations. Apparently, there are other nations that are recognized as a nation blessed by God, namely Egypt and Assyria (who are actually enemies of Israel) (Jes. 19:19-25; 45:1).<sup>6</sup>

Here it seems clear that God chose and used the kings of other nations (Cyrus was the king of Persia) as His right hand to subdue the kings of other nations. Recognition and acceptance of the truths of other nations so that they are also recognized, blessed and used by God because the reality is that other nations are also God's creations and God loves them. Their ancestors were ancestors who were brothers or sisters and one offspring and one source, namely God the Creator. Their ancestors were Abraham / Ibrahim, Noah and Adam-Eve. Therefore, even though it is recognized, it is firmly stated and commonly understood that the nation of Israel is God's chosen nation, but it does not mean God does not bless other nations. God still blesses other nations. In fact, other nations also functioned by God to rebuke Israel or be a channel of blessing for Israel (eg Egypt which God used to provide food for the Israelites when they were starving). In the conditions of war between the Israelites and other nations, there are times when Israel defeats them but there are also times when they defeat Israel. From the presentation of the OT-Biblical views and attitudes towards plurality above, it is evident that in addition to the recognition of the nation of Israel as a chosen nation, that God apparently also accepts and acknowledges the existence of other nations. God loves and blesses them. This fact shows a variety of attitudes towards plurality, namely exclusive and pluralist; and tolerant, compromise and even submissive to the fact that there are other parties around and they are even loved and made God's right hand as well.

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<sup>5</sup>In fact, the warfare carried out by the Israelites against other nations was due to political-power interests, namely to seize areas to be inhabited and controlled.

<sup>6</sup>At that time there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt and a memorial to God at its border. That will be a sign of witness to the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt: if they cry out to God because of the oppressors, He will send a Savior to them, who will fight and release them. God would reveal himself to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians would know God at that time; they will worship with sacrifices and offerings, and they will vow to God and pay the vows. See also the discussion of Ariarayah *Alkitab dan Orang-orang Yang Berkepercayaan Lain* (Terj.). Jakarta: BPK-GM, 11-12.

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### ***New Testament***

The main source for Christian views and attitudes in the New Testament about pluralism and tolerance is the example Jesus set. Jesus or Christianity emerged, worked and circulated early in the Jewish community and religion. So when it emerged, plurality was already part of it. Therefore, the teachings of Jesus-Christian concerning pluralism are influenced by its encounter with other religions, especially Judaism and Hellenism (Greek cultures). Broadly speaking, particularism or exclusiveism which sees Jesus and his teachings as the main or sole truth seems to dominate the teachings of the New Testament, both the theology of the Gospels and Paul's letters, and general letters. Jesus is seen as the only way to salvation.<sup>7</sup>

So here we see an exclusive or particular view of Jesus' words; that he is the way to God or that he is the way of salvation. This particular teaching colors the NT Bible teachings and Christianity throughout history to the present. This is the core teaching in Christianity, namely that Jesus is the Savior; it gives or guides humans on the right path to God and attains salvation. Even so, Jesus did not reject the presence of other nations / people around him. Jesus also did not give a negative judgment, or he considered bad or evil other nations. Jesus accepted the existence of other nations and was willing to associate with them, and even took a good example from that foreign nation for its moral-ethical teachings. For example, the illustration "Good Samaritan." Even groups that are considered enemies of Jewish society and traditional religions, such as the Samaritans / people who want to meet and talk.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the Gentiles by Jesus, and also later by the apostles (his students or friends), were recognized and understood as those who needed to hear the joyous news or the gospel that he was carrying. Jesus' views and attitudes towards other nations / religions show recognition and acceptance of their existence; and that they are a nation that needs to be treated well, that is by paying attention and lifting the dignity of their lives. Also that, this other community is a place to share the good news, the gospel or the message of salvation, so that they can be saved; or so that they can be freed from the chains of ignorance, poverty, pain and suffering, and they can live in peace.

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<sup>7</sup> Alkitab, John 14:6.

<sup>8</sup>See, Alkitab, Luke 10:25-37

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To carry out these efforts, people must have strong faith and live by applying love (according to the law of love: to God and to humans). This task was already carried out by Jesus and then he sent his students to continue the work into world life.<sup>9</sup>

These words of Jesus are referred to by most Christians as the Great Commission or the noble command of Jesus. This was held, especially by orthodox Christians as the main task that Jesus gave Christians. It contains meanings about views and attitudes towards the world or other parties. That the nation (including people of other religions) is the party that aims to deliver the message of salvation. So the other party is seen and addressed in the context of the task of witnessing, or the task of delivering the message of salvation. Their existence is not denied, but is considered as a party that has not been saved so it needs to be saved. The task of this witness is done to the nations. As Jesus said: "... and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and throughout Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth."<sup>10</sup>

The above teachings or beliefs have encouraged many Christians, starting from the beginning of church history, in the apostles, to this day in missionaries, to carry out the gospel message (which by other religions is considered an attempt to Christianize). So, in the teachings of the Bible, religious plurality or the existence of people who have other beliefs, is considered as a good condition, which even becomes a place for the spread and seedbed of the values of the kingdom of God. And here pluralism is understood as something that needs to exist; but it does not exist for itself. Pluralism is social-cultural and historical, not theological-doctrinal pluralism. This is because, even though they acknowledge the existence of other religions, they are still regarded as having a shortcoming, namely the need for salvation. And it is the duty of Jesus' followers to bring them to salvation. To do this task, Christians are taught to be willing to suffer (or take up the cross) or even die. This is what the disciples of Jesus did at the beginning of the development of church history and later in the age of the subsequent spread of Christianity.

Within the framework of understanding such teachings, tolerance is not a suitable term. Tolerance only becomes relevant if circumstances, or the presence of different parties, are undesirable. But in the teachings of the Bible, it is true that followers of Jesus or Christians will feel happy if they are in a pluralistic society or go to

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<sup>9</sup>Alkitab, Mathew 28:16-20.

<sup>10</sup>Alkitab, Acts 1:8. Comp, Sidjabat, B., *Religious Tolerance and The Christian Faith*, (Jakarta: BPK-GM, 1982).

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an area consisting of various cultural and religious backgrounds because such a place or community becomes a place for carrying out the task of witnessing about Jesus who saves. From the teachings of Jesus in the NT Bible it appears that there are exclusive views and attitudes in dealing with plurality. But that does not indicate Jesus' rejection or antipathy towards him. Plurality is accepted, understood and valued as an absolute reality. With this kind of pluraitas, what Jesus taught, as in the example he did with the Samaritan woman, was a proactive encounter and dialogue. It is intended and serves to produce mutual understanding, mutual acceptance and mutual elevation of the dignity and life. Jesus took a good example or example from others; in this case the story of the good Samaritan.<sup>11</sup> So besides acceptance of plurality / pluralism, acceptance must be beneficial and be a blessing, bringing peace to all parties.

### **Pluralism Discourse in Contemporary Christian Theology**

In the history of the development of Christianity, especially in dealing with different parties, exclusive and superior views often characterize Christian behavior. This has caused various conflicts, both within the Christian environment itself (for example Catholics dealing with Protestants), as well as in dealing with different religious communities (such as the tragedy of the crusades).<sup>12</sup> But history has given meaningful lessons so that with that lesson many Christians will later try to establish good relations with other religious parties. This is done through studies of religions that have generated high respect for other religions, and also through dialogue and cooperation efforts. This can be a clue to the recognition and acceptance of religious plurality.

In general discourse, especially those influenced by scientific research on religion, there are various views about religion in relation to pluralism. First, relativeism, which is the view that says that the truth of religion is relative. Every religion has its features, strengths and weaknesses. For adherents of one religion, the true religion, but for others, the true religion. Second, that religions are the same between one another. The essence or essence of religion is one and the same. What distinguishes it is the manifestation or manifestation or expression of religion that

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<sup>11</sup>Alkitab, Luke 10: 25-37.

<sup>12</sup>See this discussion in Th. van den End & Chr. De Jonge, *Sejarah Perjumpaan Gereja dan Islam*. (Jakarta: Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Jakarta, 1997); Jan S. Aritonang, *Sejarah Perjumpaan Kristen dan Islam di Indonesia*. (Jakarta: BPK-GM, 2004).

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appears in the creed doctrines or beliefs, rites, symbols and ethical-moral values and the law. Also, the psychological origins of religions are the same. The emergence of belief or faith and then become a system of belief or religion is caused by the need for a peaceful and calm life. Then the divine figure becomes the fulfillment of this need. Finally, that every religion has an important role in human beings and in society; religion becomes the guideline or guarantee of individual life, and becomes a source of moral-ethical and spiritual values of society.<sup>13</sup>

Among Christians, there are models of attitudes toward pluralism. First, the evangelical-conservative model, which understands that there is only one true religion and that the true religion must meet the size of the Christian scriptures or the Bible. And according to the Bible that only Jesus became the Savior. Other religions do not provide that salvation. This view can be called absolute-inclusive or extreme. Second, the mainstream Protestant model, which emphasizes positive views and dialogical attitudes toward other religions. These people acknowledge that there is a general statement (not just the particular in Jesus Christ) in the appearance of the universe. this general statement of God can also manifest in existing cultures or religions. But this view does not accept that in other religions there is salvation. This is because these religions advocate religion and adherents seek salvation by doing certain deeds, not based on faith in God. Moreover, other religions do not have a relationship with Jesus which is a revelation of a particular God. Third, the Catholic model, that there are many paths but the size is one, namely Jesus Christ. That God desires human salvation because of his love. But along with that, there is a church or Christian fellowship as a means of salvation. So the church is also a measure. Therefore, people can be saved because of God's love, but because they do not live within the structure of Christianity they are called "nameless Christians". This model already shows an inclusive view.<sup>14</sup>

Various thematic approaches in dealing with plurality of religions have been used, namely: first, theocentric emphasis on the discussion of God who entered into an agreement with the prophets Noah and Abraham, which means also include other religions that are one descendant with Christianity, namely Judaism and Islam. This theocentric approach shows views and attitudes that are inclusive of plurality; that the religions that exist in one environment and shared life all come from one common root

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<sup>13</sup>See Knitter, *No Other Name?*; Comp. G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*. London: Allan and Unwin, 1938.

<sup>14</sup>See Knitter, *No Other Name?*.

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or ancestor, and from the same God. This view understands that there are many paths to the center, but only one center. Characters such as Paul Tillich, John Hick and W.C. Smith adheres to this approach.

Second, christocentric, which prioritizes the discussion of the relationship of Christianity with plurality or other religions by highlighting Jesus as a measure. This approach embodies exclusive views and attitudes, namely those who prioritize Christ as a measure. That other religions can bring salvation as long as it fulfills the conditions that exist in Jesus. People like Karl Rahner stand out in this theology. A more exclusive figure is Karl Barth. Third, dialogue, which bases the understanding that every religion has a belief and is firm and absolute and that is different from other religions. Dialogue brings religious adherents to attitudes of mutual understanding and respect. This is a pluralist view and attitude. Characters such as Stanley Samartha and Raimundo Panikkar became supporters of this pluralist theology.<sup>15</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The plurality of religions has become the main concern of religions, including Christianity. This is because religious plurality has become an absolute reality in society, even since the time when the process of forming a new religion began. In Christianity-the Bible, this plurality and pluralism are faced from the time of the ancestors and later in the time of the prophets. In the meeting, there are views and attitudes that are exclusive, inclusive and also pluralist. Likewise, at the time of the formation of Christianity at the time of Jesus, his disciples and followers. There is exclusiveism, inclusiveism and pluralism. Indeed in the history of Christianity, in encounters with other parties, views and attitudes that are exclusive and sometimes even extreme, have become the dominant elements. However, statements that show pluralist views and attitudes that acknowledge and accept the existence of other parties who are seriously different and sincerely also appear. Other nations are accepted as a channel of God's blessing. This other party is understood as having the same status and role.

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<sup>15</sup>For further discussion on this issue, see Harold Coward, *Pluralisme. Tantangan bagi Agama-Agama* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1989); John Hick & Paul F. Knitter (Peny.), *Mitos keunikan Agama Kristen* (Jakarta: BPK-GM, 2001); Paul F. Knitter, *No Other Name? A Critical Survey of Christian Attitudes toward the World of Religions*, (NY: Orbis Books, 1985); Hick, John & Paul F. Knitter (Peny.), *Mitos Keunikan Agama Kristen*, (Jakarta: BPK-GM, 2001); Hick, John, *A Christian Theology of Religions. The Rainbow of Faith*, (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995); Hick, John & Brian Hebblethwaite (Eds.), *Christianity and Other Religions*, (Oxford: One World, 2001).

In the discourse of contemporary Christianity, the topic of plurality / pluralism remains a major concern as well. However, discussions about and attitudes towards this topic appear more systematic by producing various three models of views and attitudes. First, exclusive-superior, which leads to the implementation of mission-winning souls (so there is a purpose of conversion); second, inclusive, which evaluates religion or other parties contain the same elements of truth; and third, pluralism, which accepts the existence of other parties and recognizes that other religions are places where God reveals himself. So in religions, people can get to know, approach and get blessings from God. Finally, Christian views and attitudes in dealing with the plurality above, especially the inclusive and pluralist models, must be able to encourage people to reformulate theology based on the experience of encounter in plurality. In other words, that view can produce formulations of new doctrines as a result of or in accordance with the conditions and needs of religious life in a plural society. That it should be that the doctrines that are produced as a guide for religious people come from experiences of encounters with other religious communities, not doctrines inherited so far that are clearly derived from the socio-cultural and religious contexts of different eras. This can be based on the understanding that God who is trusted in religions not only works in the past when the formation of early religious concepts, but also He who is present and works in the human body now and here. For the need for the formation of contextual theological formulations or doctrines, especially those based on pluralism, what is needed first is an intensive and positive encounter, which is marked by true dialogue. Such encounters and dialogue will produce mutual understanding, mutual respect and awareness of the need for shared moral-ethical and spiritual values that lead to a harmonious, peaceful and peaceful life, both at the local and global level.

The teaching of Christian Religious Education is certainly in line with the process of theology. The theological understandings and attitudes held and practiced by Christians have implications or influences on efforts to teach Christian teachings and values to the teacher. In the context of society, especially in Indonesia, with the plurality of religions and people, the teaching of PAK should be influenced by the plural context. Therefore the term pluralistic or contextual PAK becomes a necessity, accepted and realized. Any education, if it is done in context, will certainly be effective. The effectiveness of a teaching process certainly supports educational goals that have been

determined through the curriculum used. The curriculum is certainly adjusted to the educational goals set out in the National Education Act.

For this reason, first the curriculum and especially the material or teaching material need to be adapted to the context. In this case, religious plurality is given adequate and proper attention and portions and what is very important is to make pluralism its spirit. Pluralism is the basis, consideration, and main feature in it. Second, the speakers as resource persons, whoever they are, who are involved in the teaching of PAK, need to have at least adequate knowledge, insights and skills about the condition of plural religious communities and pluralism into general principles and characters. For this reason, pluralist education for them is also urgently needed. Third, the background and social, psychological, and religious conditions of the teachers who accept PAK teaching in this plural society need to be given attention and consideration in the teaching of plural and contextual PAK. Fourth, in the PAK teaching process, appropriate methods and approaches are needed that take into account teaching materials, teaching abilities, student conditions, facilities and available time.

With the right understanding, acceptance and attitude that is pluralist in dealing with the conditions of a pluralistic or plural religious society, the purpose of Christian presence in a pluralistic religious society can be very meaningful. Christians, especially through educational institutions, can carry out their personal religious or religious life effectively, while at the same time playing a positive role in society. With pluralist PAK teaching, Christians can become agents of support for the creation of harmony and unity within the community.

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