QUAERENS: Journal of Theology and Christianity Studies
Vol.6, No.2, (December 2024): 168-186
DOI: 10.46362/quaerens.v6i2.244

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN MARK 9:38–40: A Theological and Missiological Reflection in the Indonesian Pluralistic Context

Amran Simangunsong
Protestant University of Rwanda, Huye, Rwanda
Email: amran_simangunsong@yahoo.com

Submitted: 3 March 2024 Revision: 22 November 2024 Published: 30 December 2024

Abstract
Religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed in Indonesia under Pancasila, yet in practice, violations such as restrictions on places of worship and conflicts involving religious minorities persist. This paradox between legal recognition and practical implementation raises urgent theological and missiological questions. To address this issue, this study interprets Mark 9:38–40, where Jesus' inclusive teaching challenges exclusivist attitudes and affirms cooperation beyond one's own community. Using literature study, document analysis, and biblical interpretation, the article explores how this passage provides a theological foundation for an inclusive understanding of mission in Indonesia's pluralistic context. The findings reveal that Christian mission should transcend institutional boundaries and engage constructively with society through dialogue, respect, and collaboration across faith traditions. Theologically, Mark 9:38–40 affirms that God's mission operates beyond the visible church, calling Christians to uphold religious freedom as both a constitutional right and a divine mandate. The main contribution of this study lies in integrating Indonesia's constitutional realities with biblical insights, offering a contextual theological framework that enriches the discourse on religious freedom and strengthens the practice of Christian mission in pluralistic societies.

Keywords: Mark; mission; religious freedom; Indonesian context

INTRODUCTION

Religious freedom is universally acknowledged as a fundamental human right, guaranteed by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and affirmed by Indonesia's state ideology, Pancasila. Nevertheless, in practice, Indonesia has experienced numerous violations of this right. The closure of churches in Aceh, the burning of the HKI church in 2015, and the intimidation of worshippers show how constitutional guarantees often fail to be realized at the grassroots level.[1] Reports by the Setara Institute recorded more than 244 cases of violations in 2011 alone, implicating

[1] Weinata Sairin, *Himpunan Peraturan di Bidang Keagamaan* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1994), 77–79.

both community actors and state officials.[2] Such incidents illustrate the gap between legal recognition and practical implementation of religious freedom in Indonesia.

At the same time, Indonesia is often praised internationally for its pluralism. The World Council of Churches (WCC) has long emphasized the importance of religious freedom as a core human right, and Indonesian leaders often highlight Pancasila as the foundation for harmony among six officially recognized religions.[3] However, as studies of contemporary politics show, religion is frequently politicized, sometimes manipulated by local or national elites for political gains.[4] This paradox between Indonesia's global image and its local realities makes the study of religious freedom in the Indonesian context both urgent and complex.

Scholarly works have analyzed different aspects of this problem. Abdul Mu'ti and Ahmad Najib Burhani argue that the first principle of Pancasila, *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*, contains an inherent monotheistic bias that disadvantages non-monotheistic traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism.[5] Other studies highlight the structural obstacles in building houses of worship, showing how restrictive regulations empower local authorities and majorities to block minority religious communities.[6] Hasani and Naipospos further document how discriminatory state policies under President Yudhoyono reinforced intolerance across Indonesia.[7] These studies demonstrate that violations are not merely spontaneous conflicts but are deeply embedded in legal and political frameworks.

Research also points to the role of historical and social forces. Writers such as Michael Davies and Chaider S. Baumalim have shown how radical groups, including *Laskar Jihad*, emerged within broader currents of Islamic fundamentalism and political

[2] Ismail Hasani and Bonar Naipospos, *Politik Diskriminasi Rezim Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono: Kondisi Kebebasan Beragama/ Berkeyakinan di Indonesia 2011* (Jakarta: Pustaka Masyarakat Setara, 2012), 15–17.

[3] World Council of Churches, *Freedom of Religion and Rights of Religious Minorities* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2003), 22.

[4] Ridwan Arifin et al., "The Adversity on Establishing Places of Worship: Has Religious Freedom Failed in Indonesia?," *Legality: Jurnal Ilmiah Hukum* 29, no. 1 (2021): 96.

[5] Abdul Mu'ti and Ahmad Najib Burhani, "The Limits of Religious Freedom in Indonesia: With Reference to the First Pillar Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa of Pancasila," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 9, no. 1 (2019): 113–16.

[6] Arifin et al., "The Adversity on Establishing Places of Worship," 101–103.

[7] Hasani and Naipospos, *Politik Diskriminasi Rezim SBY*, 45.

conservatism, escalating violence in Maluku and other regions.[8] Meanwhile, thinkers like T. B. Simatupang and Benyamin Intan emphasize that Pancasila, if properly understood, was intended as an inclusive umbrella ideology to guarantee religious freedom for all Indonesians, regardless of faith.[9] Yet, the gap between this normative vision and actual practice remains stark.

Theologically, Christian perspectives contribute a unique voice to this discussion. The gospel of Mark 9:38–40 presents an inclusive paradigm, where Jesus rebukes the disciples for forbidding an outsider who acted in his name, insisting instead that "whoever is not against us is for us." As Roger Omanson and W. Randolph Tate remind us, careful textual analysis reveals that this passage reflects an openness that transcends exclusivist boundaries.[10] Such an interpretation resonates with David Bosch's affirmation that mission must always engage in dialogue, recognizing God's work beyond the visible church.[11] In the Indonesian context, this text challenges Christians to support pluralism not merely as a political necessity but as a theological imperative.

This paper emphasizes that religious freedom has long been a concern of global Christianity, particularly through the World Council of Churches (WCC), which affirms it as a fundamental human right. This concern is equally relevant in Indonesia, a pluralistic nation whose constitutional ideology grants citizens the freedom to practice their faith. Thus, the discussion proceeds in two main parts: first, it briefly explores the state of religious freedom in the Indonesian context, and second, it offers a theological interpretation of Mark 9:38-40 with its missiological implications for Christian engagement in pluralism.

The research method used in this article is based on literature study, document analysis, and theological interpretation. In the first part, the paper examines the Indonesian context of religious freedom through a careful review of state ideology

[8] Michael Davies, "Laskar Jihad and the Political Position of Conservative Islam in Indonesia," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 24, no. 1 (2002): 12–14; Chaider S. Baumalim, *Fundamentalisme Islam dan Jihad: Antara Otentisitas dan Ambiguitas* (Jakarta: Pusat Bahasa dan Budaya UIN, 2003), 55.

[9] T. B. Simatupang, *Iman Kristen dan Pancasila* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1984), 40; Benyamin Intan, "Public Religion and the Pancasila-Based State of Indonesia: A Theological-Ethical Analysis," *Verbum Christi* 1 (2017): 89–90.

[10] Roger L. Omanson, *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007), 143; W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 212.

[11] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011), 484.

(Pancasila), constitutional provisions, government regulations, and reports from institutions that monitor human rights and religious life. This provides a framework to understand how religious freedom is practiced and challenged in Indonesia. In the second part, the study engages in biblical exegesis and theological reflection on Mark 9:38–40, exploring its meaning in the early Christian context and drawing insights relevant for interfaith relations. By integrating sociopolitical analysis with biblical interpretation, the method allows the article to highlight both the structural limitations of religious freedom in Indonesia and the missiological implications for Christian mission in a pluralistic society.

DISCUSSION

The discussion begins by situating the issue of religious freedom within the framework of Indonesia's state ideology and constitutional principles. Attention is given to how the principle of *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* in Pancasila has shaped both opportunities and limitations for religious expression. From there, the focus shifts to a biblical-theological reading of Mark 9:38–40, which provides an inclusive vision for engaging with religious plurality. By weaving together the Indonesian context and the gospel perspective, the discussion seeks to offer a deeper understanding of how religious freedom can be both interpreted and lived out within a plural society.

Religious Freedom and Conflicts in Indonesia

Religious Freedom as A Fundamental Human Right

Religious freedom is recognized as a fundamental human right. This right includes the freedom to have or to adopt a religion, the freedom to change one's religion without being persecuted and the freedom to practice and manifest one's religion. A person's identity and their interaction with others are very frequently influenced by their particular religious beliefs. This is very significant in terms of the different views on the appropriate relationship between individual and collective rights in relation to religious freedom.

The spiritual values and visions of various religions could be constructively and contextually used to uphold human dignity and the rights of all human beings. To live a life based on one's spiritual values and religious aspirations, one must prefer to have the right to practice the religion of one's choice. However, there is a growing tendency in

several countries, including Indonesia to use religion for political gains thus "politicizing" religion.[12] This ultimately leads to a situation where religion serves as a means to divide people, resulting in tensions and conflicts.

Religious freedom has been protected as a foundational right in Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948. Beginning with article 18 says:

> "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance".

Article 18 of the UDHR clearly encompasses two sets of rights. The first is the right to have or adopt the religion or belief of one's choice, including the right to change one's religion or belief. The second is the right to manifest that religion or belief both privately and publicly, alone or with others, in teaching, practice, worship, and observance. This statement is almost similar to the Indonesian constitution and ideological state, namely Pancasila, which is going to be discussed. The issue of the Pluralistic context of Indonesia is important as an entry point.

Indonesia as a Pluralistic Nation

Indonesia is one of the most pluralistic nations in the world, where the presence of multiple religions significantly shapes social, cultural, and political life. For Indonesians, religion is not merely a personal belief but an integral part of identity that accompanies a person from birth to death. In this sense, religion is deeply embedded in daily life, influencing values, traditions, and social relations. It has become both a cultural heritage and a moral compass, functioning as a right, a duty, and a source of meaning. Consequently, religion is woven into Indonesian society on sociological, psychological, and cultural levels, making pluralism not only a demographic reality but also a lived experience.

It is a country of more than 237 million people, according to government statistics.[13] Indonesia is home to 6 major religions: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism,

[12] World Council of Churches, *Freedom of Religion and Rights of Religious Minorities*, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2003).

[13] Ministry of Religious Affairs, *Ministry of Religious Affairs in Figures 2016,* (Jakarta: Data and Information Burreau Year, 2017), 49.

Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism.[14] Among these religions, Islam embodies approximately 87 % of the population, making it the largest religious group in Indonesia.

Based on the statistics above, it is clear that Islam is the dominant religion in Indonesia. However, Indonesia is not an Islamic state. The country works to protect religious freedom for its citizens, as affirmed by Pancasila, which is the ideological basis of the Indonesian state. The first principle says: "Believing in the oneness of the Lord", meaning that the government of Indonesia officially recognizes six religions. This principle reflects people who strive to live in unity and harmony. Indeed, mutual respect among adherents of different religions is fundamental in Indonesia.

Recently, religious fervor has caused migration in Indonesia such that some cities have become the destination of the majority of a certain religion. For instance, Muslims are the majority population in Java; on the other hand, Christianity is the majority population in Papua and Flores, meanwhile, Hinduism is the majority population in Bali. Thus, Indonesia has seen the shifting of demographic profiles in different places. Sometimes the minority religions in one place are threatened by the majority religion, resulting in migration. This is the reality of religious pluralism in Indonesia.

Moreover, each religion in Indonesia has its own sects or denominations. In this pluralistic context, can religious freedom truly be achieved? How is the position of the nation toward religious freedom, and how does Christianity view religious freedom? Further discussion provides an understanding of Pancasila to respond to such questions.

Pancasila as an Ideology for Religious Freedom

Indonesia's founding fathers established Pancasila as the national ideology on June 1, 1945, in preparation for independence on August 17, 1945.[15] The term *Pancasila* derives from Sanskrit, meaning "Five Principles" (*panca* = five, *sila* = principles).[16] It was conceived as a unifying foundation to guide the social and political development of the nation.[17] The founders believed that a shared ideology was essential to bind a diverse

[14] Ministry of Religious Affairs, *Ministry of Religious Affairs in Figures 2016*, 49.

[15] Benyamin Intan, *Public Religion and The Pancasila Based-State Indonesia: A Theological-Ethical Analysis.* (Verbum Christi Jurnal Teologi Reformed Injili, Vol. 1, 2017), 24-44.

[16] Faisal Ismail, *Islam, Politics and Ideology in Indonesia: A Study of Process of Muslim Acceptance of The Pancasila (Thesis Ph.D)*, (McGill University, 1998), 18.

[17] I Faisal Ismail. "*Islam, Politics and Ideology in Indonesia: A Study of Process of Muslim Acceptance of The Pancasila*", 18.

population, motivate collective effort, and safeguard national unity, ensuring Indonesia's survival as a modern state.[18]

Not only that, Pancasila is also the guarantee of religious freedom in Indonesia. According to T.B. Simatupang, Pancasila is an umbrella to protect Indonesian people, whether Muslim or non-Muslim.[19] The first Principle says, "Believing in the oneness of Lordship".[20] It means that Pancasila is a religious philosophy states that all people of different religions should respect the rules of One Lordship, which is believed by all adherents in Indonesia.[21] Pancasila also advocates fellowship, harmonious relations, religious freedom, and worship according to each belief.[22] That is the reason Pancasila should be an acceptable declaration for all religions in Indonesia, especially as a basis for religious freedom.

Hence, Pancasila has addressed the important issues in the situation of religious diversity in Indonesia. It promotes understanding and creates interaction between different religions and encourages them to appreciate and respect the variety of cultural and religious beliefs in Indonesian society. It is also necessary for Christian mission because the effort to create harmony and fellowship is also mentioned in Psalm 133 "…brothers who live together in unity is good and pleasant in the eye of God".

However, the complexity of pluralism makes Indonesian society encounter problems. When some groups of people have different interests and goals, they would engage in tension and conflicts. When religion is misused by individuals or groups, tensions can escalate into larger and more severe conflicts. There are some areas in Indonesia facing tension and conflicts, which are triggered by religious factors.

Violation of Religious Freedom

Violations of religious freedom in Indonesia have been both widespread and deeply damaging, often leading to violence. Between 1995 and 1997, successive ethno-religious riots erupted in Java, resulting in the burning and destruction of hundreds of

[18] I Faisal Ismail. "*Islam, Politics and Ideology in Indonesia: A Study of Process of Muslim Acceptance of The Pancasila*", 18.

[19] T.B. Simatupang, *Iman Kristen dan Pancasila*. (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1984), 10.

[20] Yasonna H. Laoly, *The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia*, Jakarta: Ministry of Law and Human Rights Indonesia, 2019. https://en.mkri.id/download/constitution/constitution_1_1625426222_4c1e13f466840d7ed721.pdf.

[21] T.B. Simatupang, *Iman Kristen dan Pancasila*, 10.

[22] T.B. Simatupang, *Iman Kristen dan Pancasila*, 10.

churches and Chinese-owned businesses. These tensions reached a tragic climax during the riots of May 14–15, 1998, when more than 1,000 people were killed and over 150 Chinese-Indonesian women were subjected to sexual violence in their homes and workplaces.[23] Such events reveal how fragile religious freedom remains when political instability and social prejudice converge.

The country has also had to face inter-religious conflict in the Moluccas Islands. From 1999 to 2002, this Muslim–Christian conflict claimed the lives of approximately 10,000 people. The number of church closures, burnings, and demolitions has continued to increase from year to year. During Sukarno's presidency (until 7 March 1967), only two incidents were recorded (an average of 0.008 per month). Under Suharto's rule (7 March 1967 – 21 May 1998), the figure rose dramatically to 456 cases (an average of 1.19 per month). During B. J. Habibie's presidency (21 May 1998 – 20 October 1999), there were 156 incidents (an average of 9.18 per month), and during Abdurrahman Wahid's presidency (20 October 1999 – 23 July 2001), the number reached 232 cases (an average of 11.048 per month).[24] The largest number of church demolitions occurred during Wahid's term, largely due to efforts by certain groups to discredit his vision of a tolerant Islam.

According to Weinata Sairin, some religious conflicts in some areas of Indonesia, specifically in Jakarta, Situbondo, and Surabaya are the result of government decrees concerning the establishment of new places of worship, namely that people will not be allowed to build a new place of worship unless they get permission from the governor or the subordinate authorized officials of a certain place.[25] This decree has caused tension and conflicts because the regulation makes the minority difficult to build places of worship. For instance, if any religious leader or group wants to build a place of worship, the person or group should consider three things: (1) the opinion of the head of religious affairs in the regional level, the city land use plan, and the situation and condition of the religion.[26] In addition, if needed, the authorized official may be directed to the opinions

[23] B. Singh, *Succession Politics in Indonesia: The 1998 Presidential Elections and The Fall of Soeharto.* (Springer: 2016), 212.

[24] Tahalele Paul, *The Church and Human Rights in Indonesia*. (Surabaya: Indonesia Christian Communication Forum, 1997).

[25] Weinata Sairin, *Himpunan Peraturan di Bidang Keagamaan*. (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1994), 3-5.

[26] Weinata Sairin, *Himpunan Peraturan di Bidang Keagamaan*, 3-5.

of religious leaders and organizations of the region.[27] Indeed, this process is very sensitive and can lead to violence and conflict because how can a minority religion get permission from a majority if authorities believe a building a temple can cause division in the community? This problem continues in some areas until today.

The conflict in Maluku was exacerbated by the intervention of the so-called *Laskar Jihad* ["Holy War Brigade"]. It is a Muslim paramilitary group that was established in Yogyakarta in 30 January 2000 in response to what they believed as deliberate persecution of Muslims in Maluku.[28] Seeing that the Muslim side was getting worse, Laskar Jihad sent thousands of men, recruited monthly from Java to assist their co-believers in facing confrontations with Ambonese Christians.[29] The arrival of this militant group in Ambon resulted in renewed fighting and a sharp rise in casualties among Christians.[30]

Nurul Arifin, one of the members of the People's Representative Assembly (DPR), protested the closing of 9 churches and 5 Buddhist temples in Aceh in 2007 by the Governor.[31] According to the local government, the worship places were closed because they were not permissible according to the regional rulers.[32] However, according to a Buddhist leader, the rule is not based on the Decree of Religious Affairs, because the Governor applied autonomous rule in Aceh.[33] Church members in Aceh were afraid because they were being intimidated through SMS (Short Message Service) that some local people would attack if they continued to worship in their churches.[34] Again, this incident is about the government's rule and it has affected Christian churches in Aceh. In 13 October 2015, the HKI church was burnt by a Muslim group because they perceived that the church did not have any legal permit from the government. It has caused 1 person's death in the incident.

A report from Setara Institute on 26 July 2010 found increasing violations of religious freedom. In particular, attacks on houses of worship escalated from 17 cases in

[27] Weinata Sairin, *Himpunan Peraturan di Bidang Keagamaan*, 3-5.

[28] Michael Davies, *Laskar Jihad and The Political Position of Conservative Islam in Indonesia*, (Contemporary Southeast Asia, 24 April 1, 2002).

[29] Michael Davies, *Laskar Jihad and The Political Position of Conservative Islam in Indonesia*.

[30] Michael Davies, *Laskar Jihad and The Political Position of Conservative Islam in Indonesia*.

[31] Kompas Cyber Media, "Jangan Anggap Remeh Penutupan Gereja-Vihara di Banda Aceh", October 24, 2012. https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2012/10/24/0854104/~Regional~Sumatera.

[32] Kompas Cyber Media, "Jangan Anggap Remeh Penutupan Gereja-Vihara di Banda Aceh".

[33] Kompas Cyber Media, "Jangan Anggap Remeh Penutupan Gereja-Vihara di Banda Aceh".

[34] Kompas Cyber Media, "Jangan Anggap Remeh Penutupan Gereja-Vihara di Banda Aceh".

2008 and 17 in 2009 to 28 cases in 2010. In 2011, Setara Institute noted 244 cases of violations of religious freedom. Within these cases, there were 299 different violations, and 105 acts among them implicated state officers. From these 105 violations, 95 of them reflected crime by comission. The victims of violations of religious freedom in 2011 included the Ahmadiyah congregation (114 incidents), the Christian congregation (54 incidents), and other religious groups (38 incidents). Such violation conducted by various community groups is increasing year by year.[35]

Religious Freedom Voice from the Gospel of Mark 9:38-40

First of all, the facts and introductions in the gospel of Mark need to be recognized, such as historical text and context, the authorship and text criticism. As Randolph Tate affirms that in approaching the text, it is necessary to investigate back ground behind the text because the authorship and historical situation are very important to employ exegetical work and interpretation.[36]

Historical Text and Context

The extrabiblical sources point to a Gentile Christian audience, probably in Rome. That Mark writes to Gentiles seems clear from his translation of Aramaic expressions, his explanation of Jewish customs such as the washing of hands before eating (7:3–4), and, in the few texts he includes on the subject, his interest in the cessation of the ritual elements in the Mosaic law (see 7:1–23, esp. v. 19; 12:32–34).[37] However, those practices appeared to be strange that the author made them unfamiliar to the audience. Mark should not need to explain it. Furthermore, he appeared to misunderstand the practice: he claims that it was followed by "all the Jews." Indeed, ancient Jewish writings did not take that as true. For this reason, many scholars have concluded that Mark himself was not Jewish.

Another point is that the audience was not concerned with Jewish sectarian belief because they were coming from outside of Jews with Greek as the primary language. The

[35] Ismail Hasani & Bonar Naipospos, *Politik Diskriminasi Rezim Soesilo Bambang Yudhoyono: Konsisi Kebebasan Beragama/ Berkeyakinan di Indonesia 2011.* (Jakarta: Pustaka Masyarakat Setara, 2012).

[36] W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*, (Michigan: Baker Book Academic, 2014), 184.

[37] W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*, 184.

decision of people to follow Jesus is not a Jewish belief, rather Jesus, the Jewish Messiah, whose death brought about salvation not only for Jews but for the whole nations.[38]

The purpose of this gospel is to understand that Jesus is the *Son of God*, but especially the suffering Son of God.[39] Moreover, believers are to be followers of Jesus. Mark also shows that Christians must walk the same road as Jesus—the way of humility, of suffering, and even, should it be necessary, of death.[40] Mark wants to impress on his readers the famous words of the Lord: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (8:34).

Mark thus wants to help his readers understand who Jesus is and what real discipleship involves. The interpreter should recognize two other, more general purposes that were probably at work in the production of Mark: historical interest, and evangelism. In addition to encouraging certain beliefs and actions in his Christian readers, Mark was providing them with a record of Jesus' deeds and words. While it is unlikely that Mark was written for non-Christians directly, the focus in the gospel on Jesus' actions, the similarity between the gospel's structure and the early Christian evangelistic preaching, and Mark's announced intention to write a book about "the gospel" (1:1 NIV) all suggest that Mark wanted to arm his Christian readers with a knowledge of the "good news of salvation."

Text Criticism

According to Roger L. Omanson, there are two verses in the pericope for us as interpreters to pay attention. The first verse is 38. In this verse, Omanson highlights three variations of reading in the sentence of *eko loumen auton, hoti ouk ekolouthei hemin*.[41] Reading (1) "and we forbade him, because he was not following us"; Reading (2) "who does not follow us, and we forbade him"; and (3) "who does not follow us, and we forbade him, because he does not follow us".[42] If we analyze this sentence, the third (3) reading can be ignored because it is a combination of the first two readings and presupposes their

[38] Bart D. Ehrman, *Brief Introduction to The New Testament*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 74-75.

[39] Bart D. Ehrman, *Brief Introduction to The New Testament*, 74-75.

[40] Bart D. Ehrman, *Brief Introduction to The New Testament*, 74-75.

[41] Roger L. Omanson, *A Textual Guide To The Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger's Textual Commentary For The Needs of Translators.* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesselschaft, 2007), 83.

[42] Roger L. Omanson, *A Textual Guide To The Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger's Textual Commentary For The Needs of Translators*, 83.

existence. And since these variations point directly to the subject of "the one (who) does not follow" *akolouthei,* therefore this variation is the best approach. We want to address directly to "the one" or the people as not part of follower. Therefore, the conjunction *hoti* (because) will be changed to the pronoun *hos* (who).

Secondly, in verse 41, Omanson highlights the expression in the text: *en onomati hoti* (on the ground that/ because).[43] And there are two variations of reading. The first suggestion is *en onomati mou* (in my name). The second is *en to onomati mou* (in the name of me). According to the text, someone gives a follower of Jesus a drink because the person receiving the drink belongs to Christ, while according to variant readings, the person giving the drink gives it in the name of Jesus. I would suggest the text reading rather than the variant reading, because the word *Chritou* is more theological. The word *en onomati mou* (in my name) The second is *en to onomati mou* (in the name of me) are expressing "the Jesus" which is mostly found among Christians. Somehow, the word *Christou* will apply to the fullness of Jesus, which can be found among others. And this is very important in the context of religious pluralism.

The small pericope about the strange exorcist follows (vv. 38–40). They had seen someone casting out demons in Jesus' name, and they had sought to prevent him from doing so. Ironically, the disciples, who had not been able to cast the demon out of the boy, now seek to prevent someone else from doing what they themselves had been unable to do.

Worse, they were doing so "because he was the one does not follow us" (9:38). The plural here moves the issue from whether the unauthorized exorcist was following Jesus to the fact that he was not one of the Twelve, or perhaps one sanctioned by the Twelve. To cast out demons "in your name" suggests first that the man was invoking the power of Jesus' name in the rite of exorcism. Beyond this, to act in the name of another was to claim his authority for one's actions, or to make one's actions an extension of the one in whose name one acted.

The verb translated "tried to stop" (*kolyo*) means to hinder, prevent, or forbid. Here, in the imperfect tense, it implies that they attempted to stop the exorcist from using Jesus' name but were not able to do so. The scene is similar to Joshua's protest, when

[43] Roger L. Omanson, *A Textual Guide To The Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger's Textual Commentary For The Needs of Translators*, 83.

Eldad and Medad were prophesying, "My lord Moses, stop them!" and Moses responded, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD's people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them!" (Num 11:2829). The book of Acts seems to take a less tolerant view of the use of Jesus'name by exorcists; the man with the evil spirit attacks the seven sons of Sceva and chases them out of the house naked (Acts 19:13-16).[44]

The issue is whether the disciples can act as brokers of Jesus' power. Jesus had given them the authority to cast out demons (3:15; 6:7), and they apparently interpreted this as an exclusive prerogative. Thus, the work of Jesus the Christ is claimed as Christian owner, and it is rejecting the role of others to work in mission. In the context of religious freedom, people are free to express their faith even though they are not part of our community.

The story condemns any factionalism or triumphalism within the body of those who would be followers of Jesus. Just as faith is ultimately a gift and not an achievement (cf. 9:24), so what in the end matters is not church allegiance but allegiance to Jesus: the exorcist still carries out his exorcisms in the name of Jesus.[45] Mark thus has a much more open and inclusive. For Mark, what is crucial is the issue of Christology, the person of Jesus. Everything else is subordinate to that.

Missiological Implication

Jesus grants freedom to everyone who uses his name to help and liberate others. His name has power and authority and it can be recognized universally. The Jesus as Christ can not be imprisoned in certain group or classification like Christianity. Indeed, it is introduced by the church recognition in Christianity. However, God has prerogative to use every one to fulfil his mission in the world. God has used Cyrus to liberate people of Israel, and made him as the Shepherd (Is. 44). God has used centurion to help his own servant through his (Jesus) command (Mt. 8:8). Thus, being the community of Jesus is important, but it is not enough. The expression of faith in Jesus is more important. Jesus Christ cannot be confined to a single group, including Christianity. Therefore, it is not advisable to forbade other people to come to the mission of Christ even though they are not following our community.

[44] R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark*. (Smyth & Helwys Pubishing, 2007).
[45] John Muddiman and John Barton, *The Gospels* (Oxford: OUP, 2010), 11.

Discipleship generally means "to follow Jesus". Jesus has called disciples to follow him. The intention of calling and fellowship are to participate in mission, such as to be the fishers of men (Mk. 1:17; Mt. 4:19), to proclaim the Gospel, to heal, to serve, to liberate (Mk. 6: Mt. 10) etc. However, Christians are oftentimes trapped into the fellowship rather than mission. Christianity tends to organize fellowship and istitution, therefore mission is limitized into church planting.

This does not mean that church planting is wrong, but mission is broader than that. Christians are called and gathered to participate in God's mission. Thus, discipleship is not romanticise fellowship and gathering. Christianity should go further to the mission of God. Mission can be participate in development, social action, advocacy and justice. Therefore, in the context of religious freedom, it is an invitation to all people of other faiths to express their convictions and work together.

Indeed, Christ can not be imprisoned in a certain group, including Christianity. It is important to emphasize that Christ belongs to all. When Christianity was born in Asia, the doctrine of the church permeated Asian culture. Thus, Christian theology, or to be more specific, Christology, must engage with the Asian character, which is identified in the issue of plurality and poverty. This is very common in the Asian context, especially in Indonesia.

Indonesia is the place of people in different faiths, ethnics, and statuses. The Greek verb *chrio*,"to anoint", is used in the phrase *echrisen* in Luke 4:18, which is translated "he has anointed me".[46] The Gospel points out that Christology is not separated from the work of love, liberation, and freedom. Thus, Christ responds to the cry and the struggle of people of different faiths and status. Christ has been there with all people in Indonesia, which has a pluralistic identity. Therefore, some missiological implications can be offered as follows:

Mission must Support Pancasila

Since Pancasila is the foundation of the state, which grants religious freedom to all citizens and societies, the church must support its ideologies. Pancasila and its principles do not oppose Christian values and theologies. While there is a mutual respect among

[46] William Arndt and Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek English Lexicon of The New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

people of different faiths to express their respective faiths. The vision of Pancasila is to establish justice, peace, and human rights, and it is relevant for Christian mission in Indonesia.

In relation to religious freedom in Indonesia, Franz Magnis-Suseno defines religious freedom as "the right of a person to decide by himself/ herself whether and how he/ she has religion or not, to live according to his/her own religious belief, to apply and communicate his/her religion to others who want to recieve it, to choose his/ her religion that he/she professes; and to be freed from any discrimination due to his/ her religion or belief".[47] Refusing other faiths in the light of liberation and justice is useless, and Jesus reminds us not stop other people only because s/he is not following our group.

Mission as Dialogue

Indonesia is a pluralistic state that consists of people with different faiths and ethnics; therefore, interfaith dialogue is a must as part of the mission. Christianity has lived side by side with people of other beliefs in the office, in the school, in the market, in the street, and in the public services.

David Bosch affirms the relation between mission and dialogue that God has already removed the barriers; his Spirit is constantly at work in ways that pass human understanding. We do not have him in our pocket, so to speak, and do not just "take him" to the others; he accompanies us and also comes toward us.[48] So, there is no choice, a mission without dialogue is nonsense. Mutual help in a pluralistic society needs dialogue to bind in good communication and mutual understanding. Hans Kung is correct when he says: **"**No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions".

Mission as Invitation

Mission is not necessarily the imperative of proclaiming good news. It is an invitation of Christian conviction after enjoying an everlasting life which Jesus Christ has

[47] Chaider S. Baumalim, *Fundamentalisme Islam dan Jihad: Antara Ontentisitas dan Ambiguitas*, (Pusat Bahasa dan Budaya, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah dan Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2003).

[48] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: A Paradigm Shift in Theology of Mission*. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011).

given through the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the faithful Christian may invite all people of different faiths to share and to love each other.

This invitation is not only to encourage other people to get involved in our community, but also to get involved in the mission as people journey in the salvation of God in Jesus Christ. The church needs to become an inclusive community moving towards the fullness of life. The exploration of ways for common witness in multi-cultural and multi-religious contexts entails the sense of inclusivity in a spirit of respect, humility, and love.

Religious freedom in Indonesia is both a constitutional right and a theological calling that must be continually embodied through inclusive attitudes and constructive engagement. The interpretation of Mark 9:38–40 reveals Jesus' affirmation of openness and collaboration beyond institutional boundaries, offering a biblical paradigm that challenges exclusivism in the practice of mission. In a pluralistic society such as Indonesia, where religious diversity coexists with persistent tensions, the passage calls Christians to live out a mission grounded in dialogue, respect, and solidarity with others. Thus, the theological vision of Mark resonates with Indonesia's ideological foundation of *Pancasila*, urging the Church to become a transformative agent that upholds justice, peace, and mutual understanding among all faith communities.

CONCLUSION

Indonesia is one of the most pluralistic nations in Asia, where religious and ethnic diversity is both a strength and a source of tension. Although Pancasila provides a constitutional foundation for guaranteeing religious freedom, in practice, this right is often challenged by discriminatory policies, local regulations, and communal conflicts. At the same time, Christian mission in Indonesia cannot be separated from this pluralistic reality. The Gospel of Mark 9:38–40 provides an inclusive vision that cautions against exclusivism and invites believers to recognize God's work beyond their own community.

Mission, therefore, must be understood not only as the expansion of the church but also as participation in God's wider mission of justice, peace, and human dignity. This requires supporting Pancasila as a framework for religious freedom, engaging in interfaith dialogue, and fostering collaboration for the common good. In this way, Christian mission contributes to strengthening pluralism and protecting religious freedom in Indonesia. The contribution of this article is to integrate sociopolitical analysis

of Indonesia's constitutional framework with biblical-theological reflection on Mark 9:38–40. By doing so, it provides a contextual theological perspective that enriches scholarly discourse on religious freedom while offering practical guidance for Christian engagement in pluralistic societies.

REFERENCES

Arifin, Ridwan, Hanif Helmi, Ngaboawaji Daniel Nte, Waspiah Waspiah, & Dian Latifiani. "The Adversity on Establishing Places of Worship: Has Religious Freedom Failed in Indonesia?" *Legality: Jurnal Ilmiah Hukum* 29, no. 1 (2021): 93–113. https://doi.org/10.22219/ljih.v29i1.15317.

Arndt, William, and Frederick W. Danker. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Bart, D. Ehrman. *A Brief Introduction to the New Testament*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Baumalim, Chaider S. *Fundamentalisme Islam dan Jihad: Antara Otentisitas dan Ambiguitas*. Jakarta: Pusat Bahasa dan Budaya, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2003.

Bosch, David J. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011.

Laoly, Yasonna H. *The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia*, Jakarta: Ministry of Law and Human Rights Indonesia, 2019.

Culpepper, R. Alan. *Mark*. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2007.

Davies, Michael. "Laskar Jihad and the Political Position of Conservative Islam in Indonesia." *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 24, no. 1 (2002): 12–32.

Hasani, Ismail, and Bonar Naipospos. *Politik Diskriminasi Rezim Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono: Kondisi Kebebasan Beragama/ Berkeyakinan di Indonesia 2011*. Jakarta: Pustaka Masyarakat Setara, 2012.

Intan, Benyamin. "Public Religion and the Pancasila-Based State of Indonesia: A Theological-Ethical Analysis." *Verbum Christi: Jurnal Teologi Reformed Injili* 1 (2017): 87–104.

Ismail, Faisal. *Islam, Politics and Ideology in Indonesia: A Study of the Process of Muslim Acceptance of the Pancasila*. PhD diss., McGill University, 1998.

Kompas Cyber Media. "Jangan Anggap Remeh Penutupan Gereja-Vihara di Banda Aceh." *Kompas*, October 24, 2012. https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2012/10/24/0854104/~Regional~Sumatera.

Ministry of Religious Affairs. *Ministry of Religious Affairs in Figures 2016*. Jakarta: Data and Information Bureau, 2017.

Muddiman, John, and John Barton. *The Gospels*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Mu'ti, Abdul & Ahmad Najib Burhani. "The Limits of Religious Freedom in Indonesia: With Reference to the First Pillar Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa of Pancasila." *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 9, no. 1 (2019): 111–134. https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v9i1.111-134.

Omanson, Roger L. *A Textual Guide to the Greek New Testament: An Adaptation of Bruce M. Metzger's Textual Commentary for the Needs of Translators*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007.

Paul, Tahalele. *The Church and Human Rights in Indonesia*. Surabaya: Indonesia Christian Communication Forum, 1997.

Sairin, Weinata. *Himpunan Peraturan di Bidang Keagamaan*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1994.

Salim, Delmus Puneri, Srifani Simbuka, and Muzwir Luntajo. "Politics and Religious Freedom in Indonesia: The Case of West Sumatra and North Sulawesi." *Jurnal Studi Pemerintahan* 7, no. 4 (2016): 594–618. https://doi.org/10.18196/jgp.2016.0044.594-618.

Simatupang, T. B. *Iman Kristen dan Pancasila*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1984.

Singh, B. *Succession Politics in Indonesia: The 1998 Presidential Elections and the Fall of Soeharto*. Singapore: Springer, 2016.

Tate, W. Randolph. *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.

World Council of Churches. *Freedom of Religion and Rights of Religious Minorities*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 2003.

Yola Sastra. "Insiden Pembubaran Ibadah Umat Kristen di Padang Disayangkan." *Kompas*, September 1, 2023. https://www.kompas.id/artikel/insiden-pembubaran-ibadah-umat-kristen-di-padang-disayangkan.

Dimas Bagus Arya. "Pelarangan Beribadah di Vihara Cetiya Permata Dihati di Cengkareng Barat: Gagalnya Negara dalam Melindungi Peribadatan Warga Negara." *KontraS*, October 2024. https://kontras.org/artikel/pelarangan-beribadah-di-vihara-cetiya-permata-dihati-di-cengkareng-barat-gagalnya-negara-dalam-melindungi-peribadatan-warga-negara.