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Theology of Mission of Banua Niha Keriso Protestant in the Context of Religious Pluralism in Indonesia: A Critical Analysis¹



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ABSTRACT

Banua Niha Keriso Protestan (BNKP) is one of the churches organized by the Western missionaries in Nias, Indonesia. Missionaries sent by Rheinische Missions-Gesellschaft (RMG) since 1865 imparted a theology of mission which emphasized the superiority of Christianity compared to other religions. This kind of mission theology can cause tension and triggered among religions because of the issue Christianization. Therefore, the primary purpose of this study was to do a critical analysis of the theology of mission of BNKP that is informed by the theology of religion, which addresses the challenge of religious pluralism in Indonesia. This research focused on mission and religions studies. Through historical, sociological, or anthropological studies and content analysis of religions and BNKP, author found four models of mission that is acknowledged by BNKP. The first is a mission as conversion. Here, mission means being a witness of the Gospel to others, so they make a personal decision to believe in Jesus Christ and to be a member of the church. The second is the church-centered mission. The mission is done for the sake of planting and building the church by selfgoverning, self-propagating, and self-sustaining churches. The third is missio Dei. The mission is understood as God's mission, and the church is only the instrument of God's mission. The last is a mission as a holistic mission. In this model, mission means reaching the whole dimension of life including the whole creation.

¹ This article is the extract of the thesis of Oinike Natalia Harefa, "Theology of Mission of Banua Niha Keriso Protestan in the Religious Pluralism Context in Indonesia" (Dumaguete: Silliman University Divinity Schools, 2018).

INTRODUCTION

¬ he context of Indonesia is very important to L be considered in the theology of mission. Even though at the beginning of the mission history, BNKP was founded in Nias Islands, but today it spans in several areas in Indonesia. Therefore, BNKP cannot avoid the relation with other religions in more complex situations beyond the Nias Islands. In Nias Islands, Christianity is the majority in terms of population, but in terms of the country's total population, Christianity is part of the minority compared to Islam. In addition, the existence of religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism demanded to be recognized and respected by Christianity. In history, Indonesia experienced intergroup tensions that often involve religions. Towards the harmony among religions in the future, the church, by her theology of mission, can be the agent of peace by recognition of others.

Theology of Mission

The journey of the ecumenical movement shows a different understanding and mission models. For instance, Marcy Gansler, in her article entitled *Missiology: Models of Mission in the 20th Century Ecumenical Movement*, classified six models of mission.²³ Although these models are not exhaustive, yet, this classification can provide the lens to examine the church position and theology of mission.

The first model is *Church-Centered Mission*. In this model, the church does mission and is done for the sake of planting and building the church. It carries over Rufus Anderson's theory of a three-self movement of self-governing, self-propagating, self-sustaining churches. This model focuses on the biblical text taken from Matthew 28: 19-20. The second model of the mission is *Missio Dei*. In this model, the mission is understood as God's mission and people, therefore, are missionaries. It implies that God sends the church. It focuses on the biblical text

from the gospel of John 17: 20-21. The third model is the Church for Others. The goal of the mission is to bring shalom. Here, evangelization is understood as the presence of the people of God amid humanity and among God's people. The fourth model is Kenosis (self-emptying) of Incarnation. It is based on the biblical text in Philippians 2: 5-8. The fifth model is Mission in the Concrete Realities of Life. This model emphasizes on Luke 4: 16-21. It has caught attention to the liberation theology, justice, peace, and development process. Dialogue with People of Living Faith is also significantly noticeable here. The last model is Mission as the Fullness of Life. It focuses on the biblical text in Revelation 21: 1, 5. It emphasizes a holistic mission that has a vision that all people living on earth are caring for creation as a family where each member has the same right to wholeness of life. It also emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit in reconciliation.

In connection to religious pluralism with consideration to the other models discussed above, the author highlighted three models of missions in this present study to analyze BNKP's theology of mission. Firstly, Missio Dei model as the work of God. This idea means that missionary activity is the manifestation of God's plan. In Missio Dei, God's action in the world is significant Trinitarian. There are two consequences of Trinitarian character that it deals with the plural context of the world, and it gives the critical stance towards how Christians challenge of the pluralist christomonistic tendency.4 In the concept of Missio Dei, the church does not have a mission, but the church participates in God's mission. Secondly, Mission as Prophetic Dialogue.

According to Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, the mission is a *prophetic dialogue*. God moves among us in dialogue; the Word becomes flesh and the communion in God-self who calls us to be in communion with our

² M Dory, "Missiology: Models of Mission in the 20th Century Ecumenical Movement," *Globalministries.Org*, last modified 2009, accessed December 1, 2017, http://www.globalministries.org/college_of_mission_missiology_models_of_mission.

³ Marcy Gansler, "Missiology: Models of Mission in the 20th Century Ecumenical Movement," *Global Ministries*.

⁴ Robert Schreiter, "Mission for the Twenty-First Century: A Catholic Perspective," in *Mission for the Twenty First Century* (Chicago: CCGM Publications, 2001), 36–37.

⁵ Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today* (Manila: Logos Publications, 2012), 59.

⁶ Dr Cathy Ross, "Prophetic Dialogue, Reflections on Christian Mission Today," *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 9, no. 1 (June 2012): 106–107.

universe and with one another. The authentic mission also involves prophecy for three reasons: sharing the good news about God of Jesus Christ and God's vision for the world, working for justice as the constitutive part of the prophetic preaching of the Gospel, and speaking of the witness of the church community as prophetic.⁷ In proclaiming the "wonderful news" of God's story in Jesus and God's vision for our world, we need to do it in the way God does it: with patience, with respect, and in dialogue.⁸⁹ Thirdly, *Mission as Hospitality*. The post-colonial question of "difference" conceives a challenge for mission discourse today.

It is related to the discussion of Christian identity vis-à-vis religious pluralism. Letty Russell proposed the idea of reframing a theology of hospitality. Septemmy Lakawa requires an alternative route in our missiological construction of Christian identity. She proposed a mission as embracing "otherness" leaves room for patience and humility in waiting for a response. Amos Yong also states, "Christian mission is the embodiment of divine hospitality that loves strangers (philoxenia), to the point of giving up our lives on behalf of others as to be reconciled to them, that they might, in turn, be reconciled to God."1011 It challenges mission perspective and practice in the world today, where fear of the "other" has become a social and political construct that influences public policies, international politics, and even social regulations.

Theology of Religions

There are several approaches used by Christians to relate to other religions. The author

⁷ Bevans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today*, 60–61.

mentioned five approaches here. The first is the three classical approaches, and the last two are the development beyond these three classical approaches.

The exclusivism approach is also known as Christocentric which is categorized by three nonnegotiable affirmations. First, it claims the uniqueness of Jesus Christ's authority as the ultimate revelation in which all these other religions must be critiqued. It refers to the favorite text of John 14:6, Act 4:12, and 1 John 5:1-12. Jesus is not an alternative or one among others; Jesus is the only true revelation. Second, it claims that Christianity is centered on the proclamation of salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, in whom God reconciled the world. Third, Jesus is the only way of salvation; no one will be saved without the knowledge of Jesus Christ. 12

The inclusivism approach asserts some beliefs of the exclusivist approach, but it has openness regarding universal access to the Gospel and Jesus Christ. The inclusivists argue that there is a universal love of God to this world and God desires that everyone has access to salvation (John 3:16, 2 Peter 3:9). That access is in general revelation. Inclusivists believe that there is an independent salvific witness because Christ works not only specifically in Christian churches but also anonymously in countless hidden ways to reach people through creation, history, and testimony of world religions. In short, there is salvation through general revelation

The pluralism approach neglects all the supreme claims of exclusivism concerning uncompromised revelation and salvation in Christianity. Theologians such as Paul Knitter, John Hick, Raimon Panikkar, and S. J. Samartha believed that there is independent access to salvation. Christianity is not necessarily the most superior religion and is not the fulfillment of other religions. The Christocentric views of Christians should be abandoned for a more global-oriented theocentric view that allows all religions to have equal participation. Pluralists also do not see the necessity of using biblical support for their view because it will lead to the authoritativeness of one religion over another,

⁸ George Hunsberger, Bearing the Witness of the Spirit: Lesslie Newbigin's Theology of Cultural Plurality (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 61

⁹ Michael Goheen, "Book Review: Bearing the Witness of the Spirit: Lesslie Newbigin's Theology of Cultural Plurality," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 23, no. 2 (April 1999): 80–80.

¹⁰ Amos Yong, Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbor (New York: Orbis Book, 2008), 131.

¹¹ S. Wesley Ariarajah, "Hospitality and the Other - Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbor by Amos Yong," *The Ecumenical Review* 61, no. 3 (October 2009): 348–349.

¹² Craig Ott and Stephen J Strauss, Encountering Theology of Mission, Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues (Baker Academic, 2010), 294–5.

such as Christianity based on the supremacy of the Bible, Islam based on the supremacy of the Qur'an, and Hinduism on the Vedas. The only universal standard of criteria is a human experience where general revelations have a specific place in the salvation arena.

The Selective BNKP's Church Official Documents

There are two classifications of the data collected in this research. The primary data comes from BNKP's current church official documents, which are related to the concept of mission and religious pluralism in the Indonesian context. The second is the data related to the historical, social, political, and anthropological documents which are produced and recognized by BNKP as resources of the church theology. Some of these documents are:

*The Church Order of the Banua Niha Keriso Protestan in 2007*¹³

The Church Order of BNKP in 2007 shows the centeredness belief in Jesus Christ. For instance, in Chapter 2, Article 2, it is stated, "God calls His people in Jesus Christ to bring God's kingdom. God's people are the universal church, the Body of Christ that is in all places and all ages, and in it, BNKP is included".14 In Chapter 3, which focuses on the confession, specifically in Article 10, it is mentioned that BNKP confesses that salvation is provided in Jesus Christ to all creation and especially to those who trust and live in His love. One of the significant parts of the Church Order of BNKP is the concept of the church calling or the mission of the church. Related to the calling of the church, Chapter 6 provided the statement that Jesus Christ is the core of Christian belief. In Article 14, BNKP is called to witness and preach the salvation of God-centered in Jesus Christ, for the salvation of humankind and all beings.

The Pastoral Order of BNKP in 2012¹⁵

The Pastoral Order of BNKP 2012 has been used until today in BNKP. In Chapter 3, there are some explanations provided, particularly on how the Pastoral Order will be executed. There is a strong emphasis on how BNKP judges the other denominations, religions, and especially the Niassan indigenous religion. The conversion of the church members to other denominations that have different teachings from BNKP can lead to ex-communication. Based on the pastoral order of BNKP and the practice of the excommunication to the church member who committed to belief to other faiths or committed to converting to other religions, it suggests how BNKP recognizes 'the otherness.'

Dane-Dane Wamati Niha Keriso Ba Famotokhi ba Dödö Eluahania (Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation)¹⁶

In Dane-Dane Wamati Niha Keriso, several extraordinary confessions of Christians related to the faith, Christian identity, and the position of other adherents of religions are stated. The author highlighted several points in the explanation of Dane-dane Wamati; for instance: Point 1 stated that "The life of Christian is the life and the salvation from God through Jesus Christ."17 Point 2 expressed that, "The truth about Jesus proved in the Bible: the Old Testament and the New Testament that the Savior came" Point 19 of the Commandments mentioned that the true God is only God's Trinity.18 Point 20 emphasizes that God forbids the believers not to worship other gods and not to make a statue (Adu). In the attachment of Dane-dane Wamati, there is a foreword from Luther which was directed to all church teachers. Luther stated that those who refuse to learn this teaching refuse Christ and do not belong to Christ. Besides, Luther said that we could not force someone to accept Christian faith; however, we need to persuade them to believe and help them to understand what is right and wrong in the society where they live and work.19

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¹³ Ketetapan Majelis Sinode BNKP Nomor: II/Tap.Ms-BNKP/2007 Tentang Pengesahan Dan Penetapan Tata Gereja Banua Niha Keriso Protestan (Teluk Dalam: BPMS BNKP, 2007), 3.

¹⁴ Ibid., 5

Peraturan Banua Niha Keriso Protestan Nomor
12/BPMS-BNKP/2012 Tentang Tertib Penggembalaan
(Gunungsitoli: BPMS BNKP, 2012).

¹⁶ BPHMS-BNKP, "Dane-Dane Wamati Niha Keriso: Ba Famotokhi Ba Dödö Eluahania" (Gunungsitoli: Lembaga Pembinaan Literatur Gereja BNKP, 2014).

¹⁷ Ibid., 35.

¹⁸ Ibid., 45.

¹⁹ Ibid., 234-5.

The Minutes and Formulation of BNKP General Assembly 57th 2015 in Padang²⁰

In Chapter 2 of this document described one of BNKP concerns is the problem of radicalism in Indonesia. In this document, it was confirmed, that in the Indonesian context, we are living in a pluralistic society. There is diversity in religion, and there is a group of inclusivists and pluralists who emphasize solidarity and harmony. However, there are also exclusivists, radicals, and extremists. Radicalism is opposite to the principles of *Pancasila* and foundation and order in 1945. The church needs to tell the prophetic voices to the government to strengthen the law and justice in Indonesia, and Christianity is called to create peace among religions.

The Journals of STT BNKP Sundermann and Some Historical Resources

The first is *Iurnal Ilmiah Sundermann Volume* Tuhoni Telaumbanua described interaction between Christianity and Islam in the Nias context.21 According to the historical research conducted by Telaumbanua, there was no conflict or war among Christianity and Islam in Nias. On the other hand, in the Online International Interdisciplinary Research Journal,²² Telaumbanua documented that the exclusivism perspective is dominant in BNKP, which comes from BNKP's ecclesiology. The exclusive perspective is also strengthened by Pietism as the heritage spirituality from the missionary and still exists until the present time among the **BNKP** members. It characterized individualistic attitude, and exclusivist salvation makes it difficult for BNKP to accept the pluralism view.

Cross and Adu²³

In Cross and Adu mentioned that one of the essential histories of Christianity in Nias is the outbreak of the Great Awakening at the end of 1915. The most significant result of the awakening was that the primal religion, as an institutional system of beliefs, was shattered. The spiritual backgrounds of the Western missionaries were Pietism and Revivalism. The character of these contexts emphasized on and individual faith sanctification, importance of reading the Bible literally, enthusiastically waiting for the coming of Christ, and sharp dualism between spiritual and profane (sin, paganism, and politics).24 Many Ono Niha experienced this as the birth of a new eschatological awareness. Nevertheless, the indigenous culture was strongly influenced by the form of Christianity of Nias people. Today, Christians in Nias as Christians all over Indonesia are struggling to relate the Gospel to their rapidly changing contexts, including religious pluralism.

The BNKP's General Church Program 2017-2022

In Chapter I of Program Umum Pelayanan BNKP (PUPB) 2017-2022 or the BNKP's General Church Program 2017-2020, it is stated that "BNKP as an integral part of Indonesia continuously struggles to overcome the issue of tribes, religions, races and among groups and also radicalism." In Chapter II of PUPB, it describes the nature of the church (BNKP) as the fellowship of sanctified people who have been baptized in the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, as the manifestation of the body of Christ, God Himself by the Holy Spirit who calls, gathers, and choose the believers. The nature of church (BNKP) has the implication to the calling of the church in three task: marturia (preaching the gospel of Christ), koinonia (maintaining the unity of the church which stands firmly in one Spirit), and diaconia (serving to liberate people from all poverty, ignorance, sickness, injustice and all forms of backwardness in society, as what Jesus Christ did).

 $^{^{20}}$ BPHMS-BNKP, "Notulen Dan Rumusan Hasil Persidangan Majelis Sinode BNKP Ke-57 Tahun 2015" (Padang, 2015).

²¹ Tuhoni Telaumbanua, "Agama Dan Negara: Catatan Sejarah Perjumpaan Agama Dan Negara Dalam Konteks Nias," Sundermann: Jurnal Ilmiah Teologi, Pendidikan, Sains, Humaniora & Kebudayaan 4, no. 2 (2012): 29–50.

²² Tuhoni Telaumbanua, "Toward Diaconate Ecclesiology: Contributions of the Reformation to Asian Churches Today," Online International Interdisciplinary Research Journal 6, no. July 2016 (2016): 41–49, www.oiirj.org.

²³ Uwe Hummel and Tuhoni Telaumbanua, *Cross and Adu: A Socio-Historical Study on the Encounter between Christianity and the Indigenous Culture on Nias and the Batu Islands, Indonesia* (1865-1965) (Boekencentrum, 2007), 1.

²⁴ Ibid., 98.

In Chapter III of PUPB, it presents the condition and the problems in BNKP. BNKP understands mission as *Missio Dei*, and BNKP is God's mandatory part to conduct the mission. The Church is called to preach the Good News to all beings (holistic). The good news is the presence of the kingdom of God in this world, as stated in the prayer that Jesus taught: "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." In this case, the earth is the context in which the Good News is manifested; the goal is human beings and all other creations.

In the conclusion of PUPB, some suggestions are established. Related to the context of pluralism, it stated that, "the context of BNKP is in the midst of a pluralism context of Indonesia and as part of the world community, especially in the ecumenical movement. The exclusivist and superior attitude needs to be transformed into the life of the people and soon to have an inclusivist and even pluralist attitude in the life of the nation and state, while maintaining Pancasila as a common ground in Indonesia. Therefore the relationship between religions and religious people is a call of contemporary mission. Moreover, participation of BNKP in the activities of oikumene that has been started needs to be continued and improved in the future.

Even though exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism are mentioned in this document, there is no further explanation given how BNKP understands each position. Therefore, the author interviewed by email to the current Ephorus of BNKP, Tuhoni Telaumbanua, and he clarified those positions. He said, "Exclusivism is the understanding of the people who consider that truth is only in their teachings and organization, and the other is false. Salvation only belongs to them, and there is no salvation in others. The exclusivists have the fortitude to convert the others to join their group.

On the other hand, the inclusivism is the understanding of an individual who considers the truth of his/her group's teaching without judging other groups. Whereas the pluralism is used to explain the understanding of the group who acknowledge the truth in other groups, and because of it, they respect, mutually recognize, and cooperate with others."²⁵ One of the leading

programs of *koinonia* in PUPB is dialogue and harmony. The interfaith dialogue will lead to creating harmony among adherents of religions. The purpose of this program is raising awareness to BNKP church members that each person has the freedom to believe and appreciate other faiths. This program will be conducted at all levels starting from congregation, resort, and synod.

The Compilation of Decision in 58th BNKP General Assembly in Hilimaziaya, July 5-9, 2017

The last document presented is the compilation of decisions during the 58th BNKP General Assembly last July 5-9, 2017, in Hilimaziaya. This document confirms the vision, mission, strategy and the main programs of BNKP for the next five years. In general, there are five missions of BNKP in 2017-2022: to develop the spirituality of the people by making family as the heart of mission or basic of the service, to develop qualified and faithful human resources (servants and church members) through education and teaching, to strengthen intimacy in internal and organizations, to increase the solidarity in the struggle for peace, justice and the integrity of creation through diaconia and spirituality, to organize finance and treasures towards the selfsupporting. Regarding the third mission, "To strengthen the intimacy in internal and external organizations," BNKP has several main programs, and one of them is dialogue and harmony.

METHOD

This research focused on mission and religions studies. The historical, sociological, or anthropological studies of religions and BNKP were also considered. It focused on the official documents of BNKP. The author used the document analysis especially the official documents relating to the theology of mission. The historical-critical method was used considering that the official documents are products of a specific historical context. Anthropological and sociological methods were

 $^{^{25}}$ Tuhoni Telaumbanua, e-mail message to author, January 20, 2018.

²⁶ R. B. Johnson and L. Christensen, *Educational Research: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2008), 34.

also utilized in this study.²⁷ The author also used key informants to help the author identify the documents. The key informants are people who have first-hand knowledge about community, issues or problems that the author is trying to investigate.²⁸

RESULT & DISCUSSION

Mission Themes Found in BNKP's Church Official Documents

Based on the finding data, the author discovers four models of mission extracted from the current and historical church documents of BNKP. They are a mission as conversion, church-centered mission, mission as Missio Dei, and holistic mission.

Mission as Proselytism and Conversion

The other documents, especially the historical resources which show the concept of mission as conversion, are still part of BNKP's theology of mission. The conversion here means a personal decision by someone who decides to believe in Jesus Christ and to be a member of the church. Some of BNKP's church programs also lead to this concept of mission, such as evangelism explosion and U'alui Dalifusögu in the diaspora. On the other hand, mission as conversion often is misunderstood proselytism. Since the eighteenth century, coercive proselytism has had a negative connotation against freedom of religion.

In the history of BNKP, mission as proselytism proselytism even coercive happened. This theology is much more affected by the heritage of theology of mission from the missionaries who came from Germany and the Netherlands. The background of Pietism was among the missionaries. strong emphasized the following concepts: the only true salvation in Jesus Christ, the Great Commission to convert people into Christianity, and the losing soul as the result of believing in pagan or other beliefs. The rejection of other beliefs was started by missionaries who

Mission as Church Centered

The author also analyzed how BNKP executes her theology of mission in the church programs. As written in BNKP's Mission, Strategy, and Main Program 2017-2020, there is a strong sense of mission as a church-centered Mission. According to Rufus Anderson, the model of Church-Centered Mission focuses on the theory of a three-self movement; they are selfgoverning, self-propagating, and self-sustaining churches. There are more concerns developing church members' spirituality, the quality of the ministers, organization and finance problem. From the main programs of the BNKP, it seems that BNKP is still more on the inward orientation of church mission rather than outward orientation.

From the BNKP's Mission, Strategy, and Main Program 2017-2020, the sense of Church-Centered Mission can be seen as follows: (1) Improving the spiritual quality of the members of the congregations so they can value Christian faith in all dimensions of life. (2) Increasing the number and quality of the ministers in BNKP to be a reformer agent within the church and in society. (3) Arranging and building an attractive and solid fellowship in BNKP, based on the love of Christ. (4) Empowering the congregation, to liberated from poverty and underdevelopment towards the prosperity of life (shalom). (5) Making every effort for financial independence in BNKP.

From the general description of BNKP mission, strategy, and program, it can be concluded that most of them focus more on the internal church improvement. Even though there are some concerns to reach external attention, they are still in a small portion of the mission. On the other hand, M.M. Thomas defined the church as the *wider koinonia* in

denounced the indigenous belief of Niassan people. Some historical and current documents showed the negative responses, such as in the Minutes and Decision of the 54th BNKP Synod Assembly in 2007, the Minister Upgrading Material in BNKP in 2011, the Pastoral Order of BNKP in 2012, the Journals of STT BNKP Sundermann, Cross and Adu, etc.

²⁷ Uwe Flick, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis, The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis,* 2014. 369.

^{28 &}quot;Section 4: Key Informant Interviews," UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, accessed October 20, 2017, http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/programs/healthdata/trainings/Documents/tw_cba23.pdf.

Christ.²⁹ The church existed as the sign of the kingdom and fermenting leaven in the universal presence of the Christ of God, the mediator of human and cosmic salvation. The discernment of faith responds to Christ outside the church and the need for Christians to be in dialogical partnership with others in the witness to the kingdom.

Mission as Missio Dei

BNKP also understands mission as Missio Dei which is mentioned in the PUPB BNKP 2017-2020. The concept of Mission Dei has a significant implication on how the church identifies the mission itself and the position the church has in mission. Mission belongs to God and "BNKP is God's mandatory part to conduct the mission." The foundation of the theology of mission, according to BNKP, is in God Trinity as stated in the preamble of BNKP's Church Order 2007. BNKP believes in God's Trinity: the creator, the redeemer, and the sustainer. Robert Schreiter discussed the necessary consequences of Trinitarian character in the concept of Missio Dei. First, this mission deals with the plural context of the world. Trinity exists with the paradox plurality and unity, with three persons in one God. Second, the Trinitarian character gives a critical stance towards how Christians of the pluralist challenge christomonistic tendency.30 In Missio Dei, the church does not have a mission but the church participates in God's mission. However, in the PUPB 2017-2022, there is no biblical foundation mentioned by BNKP which is related to the concept of mission as Missio Dei.

Mission as Holistic Mission

In some documents of BNKP, a holistic mission, which means reaching the whole dimension of life, including the whole creation, is indicated. For instance, in the PUPB BNKP 2017-2020, it states that the Church is called to witness the Good News to all creation, entirely and holistically. The holistic mission meant by BNKP is applied in five field programs: *marturia* (witnessing), *didaskalia* (teaching), *koinonia*

²⁹ M.M. Thomas, *Risking Christ for Christ's Sake: Towards an Ecumenical Theology of Pluralism* (Genewa: WCC Publications, 1987), 113.

(organizing the community), diaconia (serving others), and oikonomia (stewardship).

In the program report by BNKP synod evangelization and dialogue are board, differentiated. Evangelization belongs to the program of marturia, and dialogue belongs to the program of koinonia. It is further confirmed by the Head of Marturia Department, Rev. Adriman Laowö.³¹ According to BNKP, the duty of marturia is witnessing, which means spreading the Gospel of Christ and the message of redemption, deliverance from sin, and salvation (Mark 1:15, Luke 24:47), and also the message of liberation, justice, truth, and peace to all nation and all creation (Mark 16:15) to the ends of the earth (Act 1:8) to every creature under heaven (Colossians 1:23).

The main programs related to marturia are worship, music and liturgy, witnesses. evangelization, pastoral counseling, categorical and profession ministry, and church facility and infrastructure.³² While the duty of koinonia is the unity of the church in Spirit, and as one body of Christ, one in heart and one in mind, and one in faith that understands each other, respects each other, and serves each other (Ephesians 4:3-6, Philippians 2:2-4, I Corinthians 12:27). The calling to the fellowship is not limited to the church but also to the ecumenical and includes other religions government. One of the koinonia programs is dialogue and harmony.33

In connection to the *koinonia*, BNKP has been active in one of the government organizations, namely *Forum Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama* (FKUB) in Nias Islands. In pursuing harmony and security in Nias Islands from the threats of terrorism, the BNKP synod board had sent the pastoral letter related to love and peace. This effort is done in order to raise awareness on Niassan people to the problem happening around and to keep harmony with other adherents of religions. Other effort includes raising the discourse of interreligious dialogue in the education area, especially in STT BNKP Sundermann. The dialogue was carried

³⁰ Schreiter, "Mission for the Twenty-First Century: A Catholic Perspective," 36–37.

³¹ Rev. Adriman Laowö, Interview by author, Gunungsitoli, December 13, 2017.

³² BPHMS-BNKP, "Notulen Dan Rumusan Hasil Persidangan Majelis Sinode BNKP Ke-57 Tahun 2015," 54

³³ Ibid., 71.

out together with Majelis Ulama Indonesia, Nahdatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and the representation of church denominations in Nias Islands.³⁴

Towards Theology of Mission in the Context of Pluralism in Indonesia

From Christomonism to Triune God

In the church order of BNKP, it is mentioned that BNKP believes in God Trinity as the foundation of BNKP's belief as well as theology. Nevertheless, there are only a few of the BNKP's church documents that elaborate the concept of Trinity as the basis of all BNKP's theology, including mission. Most of the documents emphasize too much on the centeredness of Jesus Christ which could lead to Christomonism. In the pluralistic context such as Indonesia, the concept of the Trinity is significant to the theology of mission. Robert Schreiter said that there are two significant roles in the Trinitarian concept. First, through Trinity, the paradox plurality and unity encompasses three persons in one God. Second, the Trinitarian challenges Christians to speak about pluralism and christomonistic tendency.35 From the biblical side, the author considered the idea of Amos Yong who wrote his basic biblical foundation from the Gospel of Luke and the Acts. This basic theology of the Trinitarian in Luke-Acts can be considered by BNKP towards her theology of mission.³⁶

From Proselytism to Authentic Conversion

Conversion here means a personal decision by someone who decides to believe in Jesus Christ and to be a member of the church.

On the other hand, the mission as a conversion is often misunderstood as proselytism. Since the eighteenth century until today, coercive proselytism has had a negative connotation and has been against freedom of religion.³⁷ David Kerr compares some understandings of proselytism according to

34 Ibid.

Christianity. Kerr said that among current Roman Catholics, the conversion is different from proselytism. Conversion is an unchallengeable expression of religious freedom and as an ongoing spiritual journey. Coercive proselytism is rejected.³⁸

For the Orthodox Church, proselytism is recognized as Christianization. On the other hand, WCC understands conversion as part of the mission, but Christians should be self-critical that witness has often been indistinct by coercive proselytism – conscious or unconscious, obvious or unobvious.³⁹ Therefore, the church should be aware of the narrowing mission as proselytism.

From Church Planting & Saving Souls to Missio Dei

In the historical documents of BNKP, mission as church planting and saving souls is imparted by Western missionaries who were strong in pietism background. Today, BNKP adopts the concept of Missio Dei. The concept of Missio Dei is a newly emerging concept in BNKP's current church official documents, such as in the PUPB BNKP 2017-2020. It is imperative to be considered by BNKP, that the concept of Missio Dei gives the impact to the missio ecclesiae. In Missio Dei, the church exists because of a mission, not vice versa. The understanding of Missio Dei has an impact in missio ecclesiae, which often simplifies mission only for the sake of church planting or saving souls. However, mission as Missio Dei leads the missio ecclesiae to the church witness to the fullness of the promise of God's reign and participation in an ongoing struggle of the reign of God in the world.

From Church-centered Mission to Holistic Mission

From the general description of BNKP mission, strategy, and program, it can be concluded that most of them focus more on the internal church improvement. In the congregational level, the three-self movements are seen. Even though there are some concerns to get in touch with the external side, there is still a small portion of attention given. The author sees that the *Church-Centered* mission model cannot be the only central mission model today. To avoid the tendency of the *Church-Churc*

³⁵ Schreiter, "Mission for the Twenty-First Century: A Catholic Perspective," 36–37.

³⁶ Yong, Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbor, 100–108.

³⁷ David A. Kerr, "Christian Understandings of Proselytism," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (1999): 8.

³⁸ Ibid., 9.

³⁹ Ibid., 12.

Centered mission, the author proposes that BNKP needs to consider the other ecumenical models of mission that are classified by Marcy Gansler.⁴⁰ These are a mission as the Church for Others, mission as Kenosis, and mission in the Concrete Realities of life.

From Triumphalism to Hospitality

Learning from the history of the Western missionary model of mission, theology of mission today needs to be aware of the impact of colonialism in church theology. As stated by Sungkook Park, although Christianity was born in Asia, the church in Asia is usually seen as a product of Western mission throughout the sixteenth up to nineteen centuries alongside colonialism. Western triumphalism affected the attitude of doing mission in moral superiority, exclusive righteousness, monopoly of the truth, and the mere association of Christian missionary work in Asia with aggressive imperialism.⁴¹ Mission in Asia needs a transformation of attitude from aggressive triumphalism to humble mission attitudes. Mission in the Indonesian context needs to let the dream of "Christendom," as the image of Western colonial domination of the Third World, be eradicated.

The theology of hospitality has an essential significance in making a bridge between the theology of mission and theology of religions. Amos Yong suggested the Trinitarian character of the hospitable God as the symbol of interconnectedness among religions, as what happened in the Pentecost event where the Spirit used many tongues to witness God and God used religions as well.⁴² We can not limit the sovereignty of God's love and God's revelation only for the sake of our religion. It is a challenge for Asian missiology to conduct the dialogue among religions and interfaith theology approaches.

Pancasila: From State Ideology to State under God

 $^{\rm 40}$ Gansler, "Missiology: Models of Mission in the 20th Century Ecumenical Movement."

Pancasila, as the principle of Indonesia, is the source of the relation among religious adherents in Indonesia. Indonesian people need to reflect again on this principle to avoid and fundamentalism religious radicalism activity. In BNKP Church Order, Chapter 12 mentions that BNKP as a religious institution accepts Pancasila as a principle in the life of society, nation and state in Indonesia. Pancasila, as an integral part of BNKP theology, is also evident in the subtheme of 57thBNKP General Assembly 2015 in Padang. It is also mentioned that BNKP is in solidarity with the nation; therefore, BNKP continues to practice the values of Pancasila in order to overcome poverty, injustice, radicalism and environmental destruction. The challenge now is how Pancasila can be acknowledged not only because it is the foundation of state ideology, but also can be explored in the theological domain. They should open to reinterpreting Pancasila at the theological level and not only accept it because it is part of state ideology.

From Exclusivism to Particularism

In the pluralistic context of Indonesia, any mission activity today cannot be insensitive or separated from the relation with other religions. Therefore, the theology of mission should be informed by the theology of religions. Until today, the discussion regarding the theology of religion is still in the frame of three classical approaches: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. BNKP in her official church document, also only recognizes these three classical approaches.

On the other hand, this classic typology is not merely relevant in some cases; for example, epistemologically, choosing one position means excluding other positions. These approaches also seem not to appreciate particularities of other religions and do not encourage the interfaith dialogue. Inter-faith dialogue should be directed to all areas of life, particularly in the face of problems typical in Indonesia, such as educational inequality, unequal poverty, economic level, gender inequality, environmental destruction, and so on. The interfaith dialogue can occur through any form, not only in verbal form but also in a concrete praxis.

The author also viewed that *exclusivism* is not relevant or suitable to be applied in the

⁴¹ Joane Beuker, Deonal Sinaga, and Berend Veddeler, eds., 500 Years of Reformation: Contributions for the Reformation of the (Asian) Churches Today (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2014), 27.

⁴² Yong, Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbor, 65.

context of pluralism in Indonesia. As analyzed by Moyaert, this approach is the "least open" to other religions.⁴³ The author considered that the particularism approaches. In particularism, religious identity is acquired by becoming a member of a community that gathers around a religious tradition. It also presupposes a holistic approach to religion. Particularism stresses on non-interchangeability of the faith commitments and the absolute character of faith convictions. Regarding identity, a particularism approach actually becomes the front line for the exclusive faith of religion.

From Simply Dialogue to Prophetic Dialogue

Mission simply as dialogue is not enough.⁴⁴⁴⁵ The mission is best done in prophetic dialogue. Dialogue conducted by the church is not merely because there is a demand from the social context such as by the government but because it is part of incarnating the understanding of God's mission, which the church participates in it. In BNKP, the dialogue is still on the social level and has not been broadened yet into the theological level. The level of interfaith dialogue is still in the synod level and has not extended yet in the level of resort or congregation.

Therefore, BNKP needs to develop interreligious dialogue based on a mission as a prophetic dialogue. Bevans offered a biblical foundation of mission as prophetic dialogue

⁴³ Marianne Moyaert, Fragile Identities: Towards Theology of Interreligious Hospitality (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 47–81. from II Thessalonians 2:7, 12.46 In this passage, Paul speaks about being "gentle among" like a nurse caring for her children (2:7), and a little further, as "a father treats his children" (2:11). It shows the evidence that Paul himself balances "dialogical" images with "prophetic" ones. The mission is done in dialogue, and the mission is done in prophecy. The two go together. We can distinguish them, but we cannot separate them. He added, "Like life itself, engaging in God's mission is art. One needs to be in touch with the sources of creativity, the Holy Spirit, to know just how to proceed. It is the Spirit who opens our ears to listen, and who anoints our tongues to speak, who enflames our hearts to witness."⁴⁷

CONCLUSION

Indonesia is one of the world's great plural societies. The plurality in religions is one of the identities of Indonesia. The tensions among the adherent of religions often happen, especially between Muslims and Christians. BNKP itself has experienced the conflict among religions outside Nias Islands, for instance, in the case of BNKP Bandung and BNKP Bandung Timur. However, as the church exists in Indonesia, BNKP has a responsibility to maintain harmony among religions. Therefore, the understanding of theology's mission in the plural context, which is informed by the theology of religions, is essential to be developed.

From the analysis of BNKP's church official documents, the author found four models of mission that is acknowledged by BNKP. The first is a mission as conversion. Here, mission means being a witness of the Gospel to others, so they make a personal decision to believe in Jesus Christ and to be a member of the church. The second is the church-centered mission. The mission is done for the sake of planting and building the church by self-governing, selfpropagating, and self-sustaining churches. The third is missio Dei. The mission is understood as God's mission, and the church is only the instrument of God's mission. The last is a mission as a holistic mission. In this model, mission means reaching the whole dimension of life including the whole creation.

⁴⁴ Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, "We Were Gentle among You: Christian Mission as Dialogue," *Australian EJournal of Theology*, last modified 2006, accessed February 25, 2018, http://aejt.com.au/data/-

 $assets/pdf_file/0011/395129/AEJT_7.3_Bevans_Schroe\\ der_Gentle_Among_You.pdf\;.$

⁴⁵ John N. Sheveland, "Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today - By Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder," *Religious Studies Review* 38, no. 1 (March 2012): 10–11, http://doi.wiley.com/-10.1111/j.1748-0922.2011.01574_2.x.

⁴⁶ Bevans and Schroeder, Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

The biblical foundation of BNKP's theology of mission is based on the concept of God's Trinity. It is taken from John 17:3, Luke 4:18-19, and Matthew 11:28-30. The foundation in God's Trinity can help BNKP to deal with the context of religious pluralism because on the one side, it holds the paradox of plurality and unity, and from the other side, it creates the awareness to Christians about the challenge of pluralism and avoids christomonistic tendency.

Theology of the mission of BNKP also needs to be informed by the theology of religions. There are three classical models of the theology of religions that is well-known in Indonesia and in BNKP particularly. They are exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. The challenge of religious pluralism for BNKP's mission is how to be more inclusive of relating to an adherent of other religions. Therefore, BNKP can consider the other approaches such as particularism and hospitality approach.

Given all the previous data, it can be concluded that the theology of mission of BNKP, which is revealed in the current church official documents, is not yet fully recognized and opened for religious pluralism in Indonesia. The concept of mission such as missio Dei and holistic mission needs to be expanded in a more comprehensively. On the other hand, BNKP also calls for integrating other concepts of mission, such as mission as kenosis, mission in the reality of life, mission as the fullness of life, mission as prophetic dialogue, and mission as hospitality. Also, the theology of the mission of BNKP has to be informed by the theology of religion especially by particularism and hospitality approaches. All these concepts of mission can help BNKP develop a theology of mission in the religious pluralism context in Indonesia.

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