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**PROCEEDINGS BOOK
INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR OF STT REAL BATAM
"KINGDOM ECONOMY AND MISSION"**

May, 14-15th 2018

**House of Glory Building – 2nd Floor, STT REAL Batam Campus
Jl. Ahmad Yani, Taman Baloi, Batam Kota, 29432
Kotamadya Batam – Kepulauan Riau**

Demikianlah Yesus berkeliling ke semua kota dan desa, Ia mengajar dalam rumah-rumah ibadat dan memberitakan Injil Kerajaan Sorga serta melenyapkan segala penyakit dan kelemahan. [Matius 9:35]

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MISSION STRATEGY IN A PLURALIST SOCIETY Indonesia Context

(Irfan F. Simanjuntak)

Abstract: Mission is the basis of the existence of Christianity. Without a mission, the church will lose its authenticity. Therefore, it is very necessary for Christians of all ages to always review their views and loyalty to the mission. That is why in this paper an understanding of mission will be presented. In addition, we will briefly discuss the reality of the plural conditions of society where Christian mission must be carried out effectively by taking the background of Indonesia because it is a place where the author lives. Finally, this article will provide suggestions about carrying out effective mission strategies that are carried out by building bridges of communication, namely by dialogue, loving witness and service through words and deeds.

Key Words: *mission, compound, strategy, sensitive, Indonesia*

Introduction

Mission is the basis of the existence of Christianity. Emil Brunner once said: "The Church exists by mission as fire exists by burning."¹ This means that Christianity without a mission is a contradiction in essence. Times don't change this fact. Saneh

¹Emil Brunner, *The Word and the World* (London: SCM Press, 1931), 108.

said, "the church was born by mission and lives by it."² It can be understood that the church was born from a mission and therefore must live that identity always. Thus, times may change, trends may change, the tradition or liturgy of the church may arise and sink but the mission must not be ignored. In this way the church can not only maintain its existence, but also maintain its authenticity.

But in the midst of an increasingly advanced, critical and pluralistic society, of course this essential call of Christianity needs to be re-evaluated; Not in its essence, but in its values, strategies or methods. Today we live in a pluralistic society. In the Indonesian context, the diversity of tribes, cultures and beliefs is a blessing that must be maintained and maintained harmony. Thus it is a challenge for believers to define effective missions and strategies in the context of a pluralistic society like Indonesia. This is the purpose of this paper, which is to rearticulate its mission and strategy so that Christianity can be embedded and flourish on Indonesian soil.

MISSION STRATEGY IN THE MIDDLE OF COMMUNITIES

Christian mission

The mission term comes from Latin, which is *missio* or *mitto* which means sending or sending. Initially, the use of this term was in no way related to the preaching of the Christian faith or the proclamation of the Gospel but rather to express the actions of the

²Lamin Sanneh, "Should Christianity be Missionary? An Appraisal and an Agenda," *Dialog* 40, no. 2 (2001): 86.

Triune God. As Bosch said, "the Latin word *missio* is an expression used in the doctrine of the Trinity, to show the sending of the Son by the Father, and the sending of the Holy Spirit by the Father and the Son.³" But in subsequent developments, the mission became a term that was always associated with the preaching of the Christian faith to unbelievers⁴, where verses known as the Great Commission are often used as the main foundation (ie, Matt. 28: 18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:27; John 20:21; Acts 1: 8).

The Church is indeed called to carry out a mission. Christian faith is missionary faith. Without having to base even on the "Great Commission" verses, Christianity is essentially a missionary for worshipping a missionary God. From Genesis to Revelation, God is the person who sends and saves. He is an active God who intervenes in history so that man experiences salvation as He planned. That is why Christianity does not worship a passive God, but God who is always actively sending and saving, as Stott said, "The living God of the Bible is sending God."⁵ Thus, the church is there to take part in the missionary acts of God . The Church is called to participate in God's mission of presenting God's Kingdom

³David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 228.

⁴The author is aware that even this definition has now been widely discussed again. For some people, mission can mean social care where the church tries to transform society with humanitarian efforts, such as alleviating poverty, providing education, defending the oppressed, and others. For more details, read books / writings like J.C. Hoekendijk, *The Church Inside Out* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1964); or Leonardo Boff, *New Evangelization: Good News to the Poor* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991). However, due to limited space, the issue will not be discussed here because it does not answer the purpose of writing this paper. Here, the author holds the traditional opinion that the mission relates to the preaching of the gospel to non-believers, though it does not rule out the possibility that it is done with social actions.

⁵John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downer Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1975), 21.

on earth and making His will happen on earth as it is in heaven (cf. Matt. 6:10). The church that understands and lives this is a church that lives according to its nature and vocation, while that which is not a contradiction in essence.

The Context of a Comprehensive Society

The world today is a global village where people of different cultural, economic, national and religious backgrounds live together and are connected to each other. Modernization and technological advances have transformed the face of the world into a very heterogeneous environment without strict restrictions. Indonesia is also not free from this condition. Born as a country that was originally diverse both in terms of culture, social and religion, Indonesia is currently one of the most diverse and developing countries.

Based on the official BPS data release, in 2010, Indonesia's population reached 237 641 326 people.⁶ Its population consists of many ethnic and sub-ethnic varieties. The majority race is Malay (94%), then Chinese (4%), Irian/Papua (1.2%) and others are Arabic, Indian, European and mixed race (0.8%).⁷ In terms of language, there are about 583 active languages used by Indonesian people to date.⁸ Whereas in terms of religion, the percentage of adherents of

⁶Central Bureau of Statistics, Indonesian Population Amount and Distribution. <http://sp2010.bps.go.id/> (accessed April 30 2018).

⁷Iman Santoso, "The Church in Indonesia," in *Church in Asia Today: Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. Saphir Athyal (Singapore: The Asia Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 1996), 325.

⁸Santoso, "The Church in Indonesia," 325.

religion in 2010 included 87.18% Islam, 6.96% Christianity, 2.91% Catholic, 1.69% Hindu, 0.72% Buddhist, 0.05% Confucian, and 0.49% of other adherents.⁹ These things make Indonesian society truly diverse and this fact certainly makes Indonesia a mission field as well as a demonstration of how the church / Christianity can be a blessing for a pluralistic nation so that Christianity is rooted and thrives in the nation.

Towards an Effective Mission Strategy

Basically, there is no definite and most effective mission strategy because each context requires a different strategy. In this section, the author will suggest some strategy principles more than the strategy itself. This is done because the breadth of the topic of discussion and the limited space available. Further research needs to be done. And in this section, one segment that is suggested that the mission can be carried out effectively is by building communication bridges.

Bridges are a necessary part of life. It is an instrument that connects two separate things. As we know, building a bridge of communication not only needs to be done in carrying out a mission in a pluralistic society, it is also the approach used in the Bible, for example by the Son of God who incarnated to be human in Jesus Christ and by the Apostle Paul when approaching people Athenians

⁹Central Bureau of Statistics, Population by Region and Religion Taken, <https://sp2010.bps.go.id/index.php/site/tabel?tid=321> (accessed May 1, 2018).

using the concept of “unknown God” (cf. Acts 17: 16-34).

The communication bridges in question can be done in many ways. One of them is dialogue. Through dialogue, Christian faith can be communicated to others in a spirit of friendship, because it aims to understand and understand each other. This certainly can end in acceptance. Theologically trusted, dialogue is part of the nature of God that elevates fellowship and communion.¹⁰ That is, dialogue is an integral part of people who know their Lord. And through dialogue is in a position to try to understand others and simultaneously communicate the Gospel sincerely. Therefore, in dialogue, sensitivity is needed to the social, cultural, religious and political aspects of the situation so that the dialogue is successful and constructive. And of course this is very suitable to be applied in the context of a pluralistic society like Indonesia.

Another communication bridge that can be built is through loving testimonies. Even though the news we bring is true and free, but the way and the motive for delivery are also important. Christianity has always been seen by the public as tainted by Western culture and colonialism which practices a sense of superiority in addressing various life issues. This stigma has long been embedded in many communities including Indonesia. This is compounded by the attitude of some Christians who live exclusively so that they endorse such stigma. If this continues, Christian news certainly has the potential to be rejected. That is why we need to develop a humble and loving attitude, as Singgih said, “Christian

¹⁰For a full and interesting explanation of this, see Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), especially in Chapter 2 of the book.

churches in Indonesia, need to move from a triumphant and royal theology to a more contextual servant theology, the theology that has to take seriously the context of Indonesia , namely religious pluralism and suffering and poverty of the common people.¹¹ "From here it can be seen, again sensitivity and care become an integral part of a Christian mission. The Church must stop communicating to the community that the church is insensitive and caring through its magnificent buildings or through the news with its bombastic words that ignite discomfort among other people. In essence, the church must be humble and loving to be involved in every struggle in the community where it is located.

Another thing that needs to be pursued is service to the community through words and deeds. In the midst of a pluralistic society, the mission must be carried out with the principle of salt or yeast. Testimony must be done through the daily life of the church. In this case, testimonies flow from the lives of Christians who are aware of their mission calls, not regular campaigns in the form of programs such as low-cost food or TRC.

In other words every believer testifies through his words and actions in their daily lives. Every believer is built in his consciousness, and therefore moves in the midst of society, exemplifies and witnesses their faith through words and deeds. This is what Sidjabat meant when he said:

In responding to God's demand the Christian is primarily facing the problem of the community to which he belongs (that is the Church) and the World. Being in the world he has to responsibility to become salt of the earth, which implies to

¹¹ E.G. Singgih, "Contextualization and Inter-Religious Relationship in Java: Past and Present," *Asia Journal of Theology* 11, no. 2 (1997): 258-59.

be a good exemplary citizen of the world, which is evidently contrary to being a pacifist or a recluse.¹²

If this is done, Christians together will fill their community with the gospel. This is what Cardoza-Orlandi refers to as "missional preaching," more acceptable to the surrounding community.

CONCLUSION

Mission is an integral part of the existence of the church. Times change does not change this fact, only the strategies, methods or approaches used need to be changed. Therefore, in the midst of a pluralistic society, the Christian mission must be carried out with sensitivity, humility, love, care and of course done in the daily life of believers.

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¹²W. Bonar Sidjabat, *Religious Tolerance and the Christian Faith* (Jakarta: Gunung Mulia, 1982), 226.

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