



## **Responding to Theology Religionum in Christian Religious Education**

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### **Abstract:**

*Lately, religion has become something scary and worrying. Religion in the hands of its followers often appears with a face full of violence and as if it has lost its friendliness. In recent years, there have been many conflicts, intolerance and violence in the name of religion and belief. Religious pluralism is not a reality that requires people to put each other down, belittle each other, or confuse one religion with another, but instead places it in a position of mutual respect, mutual recognition and cooperation. In order to eliminate the destructive aspects of religion and present its constructive side as a unifier, schools as institutions mandated to educate the nation's life must participate in providing an understanding of religion and must be able to create an environment that provides education. Opportunities for students to build harmonious social relationships between students of different religions. For this reason, an effort is needed in certain religious communities to reflect or think coherently about the new awareness as an effort to respond to this problem of pluralism. To address this matter, Religionum Theology as a branch of theology that discusses how Christianity responds to the reality of the existence of religious plurality outside itself, especially in Christian Religious Education.*

**Keywords:** *pluralism, theology religionum, christian religious education*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Intensive efforts in recent years to bring clarity of definition to the field of religious education involve not only explaining the role of theology but also exploring the function of religion. Theology and religion make distinct and necessary contributions to Christian religious education.<sup>1</sup> Life in the midst of religious pluralism in this world, everyone has the nature of justification for their respective religions. There are several characteristics or descriptions of a person in stating the truth of his religion. The problems that arise in the midst of religion are not a new problem. From the beginning this problem has been a never ending problem. Through the existing problems, it is hoped that Christians will not just ignore it or just don't care.

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<sup>1</sup> Mary C. Boys. "The Role of Theology in Religious Education." *Horizons*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1984): 61–85. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0360966900033028>.



The pluralism of religions is one of the prominent issues in the world today. Most countries or societies are faced with almost the same situation where harmonious relations between religions are a very important and urgent need for stability in society. If the relationship between religions can be built and developed properly, it will be a great and constructive potential for the progress of the state/society. On the other hand, if not, it will be a huge potential conflict in society.

Pluralism is not just a multiplication of diversity, not just extremist, but qualitative according to Th. Sumartana.<sup>2</sup> But today's pluralism, its types, forms and contents are different from the pluralism we experienced in the past. In the past, pluralism demanded a response to harmony, co-existence and harmony of life from religious groups in society. But today's pluralism is active if we don't want to pay attention to it. The differences between religions are not about truth and untruth, but about different perceptions of one truth.

This means that speaking of religious beliefs as right or wrong is not permissible is a personal matter. According to David Breslaur in Pandia, everyone has the right to believe in their own faith. This is what is called religious pluralism.<sup>3</sup> Pluralism, in this case religious pluralism, emerged as an intention to overcome religious conflicts that often occur due to conflict of beliefs (truth claims) between existing religions.

In the context of religious pluralism, inter-religious relations must be positioned within the framework of human relations, because inter-religious relations which are positioned apart from inter-humanitarian relations will result in religion losing its meaning. Religion is also a tendency that cannot be avoided by humans, because religions contain teachings and guidelines for life for their adherents. Religiosity then becomes a benchmark for personal recognition of how a person reaches a certain level of depth in living and practicing the teachings of the religion he adheres to.<sup>4</sup> The attitude of religiosity refers to the values of goodness that are embedded in the heart and are expressed in noble attitudes

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<sup>2</sup> Th. Sumartana. *Meretas Jalan Teologi Agama-Agama di Indonesia. Theologi Religionum*. (Jakarta: PT. BPK Gunung Mulia, 2007), 18-19.

<sup>3</sup> Wisma Pandia, *Teologi Pluralisme Agama-Agama* (Tangerang: Sekolah Tinggi Theologi Injili Philadelphia, n.t.), 4-5.

<sup>4</sup> Hans Kung, 'What is True Religion: Toward an Ecumenical Criteriology' dalam *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion*, Peny. Leonard Swidler, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 3



and behavior in accordance with these religious values.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the religious value of "goodness" will show a good religion, the religious value of "fair" will show a just religion, a religious value that "loves" will show a religion who loves and even forgives the enemy.<sup>6</sup>

For this reason, an effort is needed in certain religious communities to reflect or think coherently about the new awareness as an effort to respond to this problem of pluralism. So Religionum Theology as a branch of theology that discusses how Christianity responds to the fact that there is a plurality of religions outside of itself.<sup>7</sup>

Theology of Religions (in English Theology of Religions, in Latin Theologia Religionum) has a focus on the study of theology of religions providing an effort to see how Christians view and evaluate other religions, as well as how positive relationships between religions are made possible through theology. which is constructed. One of the figures in the theology of religions is the English theologian named Alan Race. Religionum theology was developed with the intention of discovering the meaning of the existence of other religions. For this purpose religionum theology concentrates itself on two things: the view of God and the view of others.<sup>8</sup>

Religionum theology is nothing but an attempt of theological reflection to place pluralism as the center of attention and the center of the problem. In this case, Religionum Theology must be based on realities, namely: internal (ecclesiastical) and external (religious life in general). At the internal level, theology religionum seeks to find the theological meaning of the pluralism of these religions. This is the essential task of every religious group's attempt to make itself relevant to contextual circumstances or theology. At the external level, theology of religion is our response to the whole future of society and religions.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> A.A. Yewangoe. *Hidup dari Pengharapan: Mempertanggungjawabkan Pengharapan di Tengah Masyarakat*. (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2017), 237.

<sup>6</sup> A.A. Yewangoe. *Hidup dari Pengharapan: Mempertanggungjawabkan Pengharapan di Tengah Masyarakat*, 238.

<sup>7</sup> T. Cooling and R. A. Bowie. "Christian theology and school Religious Education: Exploring the relationship." *Theology* Vol.124 (2021): <https://repository.canterbury.ac.uk/item/8xy47/christian-theology-and-school-religious-education-exploring-the-relationship>.

<sup>8</sup> John Titaley. *Menuju Teologi Agama-Agama Yang Kontekstual: Pidato Pengukuhan Guru Besar Ilmu Teologi di UKSW* (Salatiga: Fakultas Teologi UKSW), 3.

<sup>9</sup> Th. Sumartana. *Meretas Jalan Teologi Agama-Agama di Indonesia*. *Theologi Religionum*, 20; Ebenhaizer I. Nuban Timo and Bobby Kurnia Putrawan. "The Bible In Contextual Theological Work In Indonesia". *QUAERENS: Journal of Theology and Christianity Studies* Vol.3, No.1 (2021): 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.46362/quaerens.v3i1.24>.



Tripolar Typology is an approach to the Theology of Religions popularized by Alan Race. Tripolar typology is used as a standard in the study of theology of religions, and is still widely used in discourses on theology of religions. Tripolar typology is used to map the various approaches of Christian theologians and non-theologians regarding the relationship of Christianity with other religions. This mapping is based on the similarities and differences in their perspectives on other religions outside of Christianity. The three typologies are exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism.

Exclusivism is an attitude of closure, separation, and fanaticism towards other religions, where there is an assumption that what is believed is the right one and assumes that the truth is the most perfect and other people are in total or partial darkness. Adherents of this exclusivism have a great fanaticism. The main doctrinal basis of exclusivism is that Jesus Christ is the only Savior (John 14:6) and also outside the church there is no salvation.<sup>10</sup>

Inclusivism itself is more loose in nature and seems to be flexible to something that is outside of itself, not rigid and gives way to other than itself to acknowledge their truth. Thus, the basic assumption of religious inclusivism is to acknowledge that truth exists only in religion itself, but provide an opportunity or way for those of different beliefs to acknowledge that their religion is also true.<sup>11</sup>

Religious pluralism is a condition of living together (coexistence) between different religions (in a broad sense) in one community while maintaining the specific characteristics or teachings of each religion. However, in terms of the context of religious pluralism often used in socio-scientific studies and discourses in this modern era, this term has found a very different definition of itself from its original meaning.<sup>12</sup>

Christian Religious Education (CRE) is very much in line with the theological process, where the attitudes held and implemented by Christians have implications or influences on efforts to teach Christian values to students. Therefore, a pluralist or contextual PAK must be accepted and realized effectively. The teaching process certainly

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<sup>10</sup> Paul F. Knitter. *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, Ossining, (New York: Orbis Books, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> Paul F. Knitter. *Introducing Theologies of Religions*; Taras Dzyubansky. "Interfaith Leadership and Typologies of Religious Plurality." *Journal of Interreligious Studies* Vol.30, No.30 (2020): 70-78. <https://irstudies.org/index.php/jirs/article/view/475/513>.

<sup>12</sup> Paul F. Knitter. *Introducing Theologies of Religions*; Taras Dzyubansky. "Interfaith Leadership and Typologies of Religious Plurality": 70-78.



supports the educational goals that are determined through the curriculum reference in accordance with the educational goals.<sup>13</sup> For this reason, it is necessary to pay attention to religious plurality so that teachers, students or anyone involved in CRE learning is able to respond broadly to religious pluralism in society.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The method in this research is descriptive analysis which aims to analyze the problems that occur in the community. This study also uses literature data relating to Pluralism in Religionum Theology with Christian Religious Education. The context for this article is established through an initial review of the literature on various perspectives on religious theology and then by looking at the relationship between religious theology and Christian Religious Education. The final part, builds a proposition that determines the conceptualization of theology of Religion with Christian religious education.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The Bible says “...God created man in his own image,...male and female he created them,” Genesis 1:27. All humans are creatures created by the Creator. No human being can pride himself as a creature that is better than the others. All humans have the same position before God, namely as His created people. Although it must be admitted that God created each person uniquely, which differs from one person to another. However, it does not affect human nature before God. This awareness or teaching exists in all religions/beliefs. This is a solid basis for understanding the pluralism of religions.

Religions are a form of human response to God, the Creator, but they do not change the nature of man himself before God. All human beings remain His created people. God created man as a noble creature because God created man in the image and likeness of God. No other invention has such a special position. It has a very meaningful meaning in understanding the existence of every human being in this world. Every human being must respect each other because all human beings are noble individuals, worthy of good treatment. Such treatment is very important in embracing the pluralism of religions.

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<sup>13</sup> T. Cooling and E. Green. "Competing imaginations for teaching and learning: the findings of research into a christian approach to teaching and learning called What If Learning." *International Journal of Christianity & Education*. Vol.19, No.2 (2015): 96-107. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056997115583432>.



Henry Efferin argues, "God does want all human beings to be treated with the same honor because they have the inherent dignity of being human beings created in God's image." This understanding should encourage everyone to always want to get along or interact with other people without highlighting the differences that lie behind them. In the creation of man, God created man in flesh and blood. It shows the mortality of man as a created being. All humans are in the same condition, namely as mortal beings, who are not immortal. Therefore, humans have the same struggles in life. Basically, all religions or beliefs offer answers to these human struggles.<sup>14</sup>

Gerrit Singgih says, 'Human mortality and human longing for immortality are fundamental problems for religions.' All humans seek answers to the problems of life in this world through existing religions. Therefore, the pluralism of religions needs to be understood as the diversity of humans in facing the struggles of human life. Thus, everyone in their respective religions does not need to bring each other down but on the contrary respect each other, encourage and cooperate so that the struggles in life can be solved together.<sup>15</sup>

However, there are many things that cause today's pluralism to become an illustration of how religious people have retreated in understanding differences. For example, the occurrence of the destruction of houses of worship in several areas is an illustration of the worsening of interfaith social relations. This reality is part of the ongoing conflict caused by the exclusive pattern of interfaith social relations. The development of understanding of religious pluralism and multifaith education most likely stems from the paradigm error of people in studying religion. They study religion by studying the reality of religious people who are considered to be a representation of religion itself.

Religious worldviews that tend to be anachronistic indeed have the potential to divide and claim each other's truth is certain to lead to conflict. Indeed, declaring religion solely as the source of the problem is clearly unshapable and a-historical, due to the fact that for centuries religion has sustained and contributed to millions of people. Then religion can also be an adhesive or unifying factor, but not a union. The concept of

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<sup>14</sup> Efferin, Henry. "Toleransi Agama dari Perspektif Injili" dalam *Perjuangan Menentang Zaman* oleh Hendra G. Mulia (Ed). (Jakarta: Reformed Institute Press, 2000).

<sup>15</sup> Gerrit E. Singgih. "Hidup Kristiani dalam Masyarakat Keagamaan yang Bersifat Majemuk" dalam *Meretas Jalan Teologi Agama-Agama di Indonesia*, Tim Balitbang PGI (Penyunting), (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2000).



unifying or adhesive is not uniformity, because if it is meant is this uniformity that becomes one of the root causes of conflict.

The concept of religion as a unifier is more about the spirit of inclusiveness, tolerance, egalitarianism, humanization derived from religious teachings. Therefore, it is true that religion that must be put forward is not the ideological and normative aspect of religion which tends to see problems in black and white - but the concept and understanding of religion that is more appreciative of diversity (plurality), is open and dialectical (inclusive), is more problem-oriented. The real thing in society is not dealing with things that are ivory towers and only matters of the afterlife (eschatological). In the author's opinion, with such a religious display, the opportunity to build mutual understanding between religious adherents will be achieved.

Pluralization which is the basis of pluralism can be formulated as a process by which the number of choices in the personal atmosphere of modern society rapidly multiplies in all stages, especially at the world, faith, and ideology levels, including religion. In a society whose population consists of various religions, the competition claims the truth in which all say its truest religion becomes inevitable.

Religious pluralism is not a reality that requires people to put each other down, belittle each other, or confuse one religion with another, but instead places it in a position of mutual respect, mutual recognition and cooperation. We can learn spiritual riches and meaningful values from other religions to enrich our experience of faith. Not learning to look for the shortcomings and weaknesses of other religions to be able to corner, or take lightly, or assume that other religions are not true and our own religion is the (most) true. Thus, pluralism becomes a shared wealth.<sup>16</sup>

Seeing the impasse or it can also be called the sterility of theology, Sumartana proposed one form of response in the face of the reality of pluralism, namely by developing a theological format called *theologia religionum*. *Theologia religionum* is “an

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<sup>16</sup> Cornelia Roux. "Religion in Education: Perceptions And Practices." *Scriptura* 89 (2005): 293-306. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7833/89-0-1017>.





attempt at theological reflection to put pluralism at the center of attention and center of the problem.”<sup>17</sup>

Theologia religionum is basically an effort from within certain religious communities to reflect or coherent thoughts about new awareness as an effort to respond to the problem of pluralism. Theologia religionum is nothing but an effort of theological reflection to place pluralism as the center of attention and the center of the problem. Theologia religionum must have a footing in reality, Theologia religionum is to seek the theological meaning of the pluralism of these religions. And the essential task of religion is to make itself relevant to the situation, theologia religionum is our response to the whole future of society and religions. The future is a shared future. In the theology religionum we are directed at how we can maintain our religious identity without underestimating and even respecting the religious identity of others and the integrity of others' religions.<sup>18</sup>

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Christian Religious Education as a subject or course, must teach well, in addition to teaching clear integrity and teaching how to apply strong integrity in society. It is very important to think carefully about attractive and targeted learning designs for inter-

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<sup>17</sup> John Trokan. "Models of Theological Reflection: Theory and Praxis." *Journal of Catholic Education* Vol.1, No.2 (1997): A4. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15365/joce.0102041997>; Th. Sumartana, "Theologia Religionum," 19.

<sup>18</sup> Paul F. Knitter. *Introducing Theologies of Religions*; Taras Dzyubansky. "Interfaith Leadership and Typologies of Religious Plurality": 70-78.

<sup>19</sup> John Trokan. "Models of Theological Reflection: Theory and Praxis": A4.





religious dialogue. The meaning of our lives as Christians must be able to show a good attitude even though there are many challenges in carrying out religious life.<sup>20</sup>

One of the maximum essential troubles this studies have a look at illustrated changed into that there need to be a extra enough guide gadget for student-instructors to offer a theologia religionum training lesson at some stage in their Chistian education practices. There are simply now no longer sufficient possibilities on the diagnosed school allotted for the pre-provider teacher education programme for them to exercise their newly advanced understanding and coaching abilities in faith training. It is a truth that almost all of instructors in school who've to enforce the brand new coverage regarded to be poor approximately the variety of religions and also are now no longer geared up with understanding or information of the variety of religions. The alarming issue, however, is the truth that students, at some stage as expert instructors, may additionally now no longer be capable of take the possibility or have the braveness to provoke a multireligious technique in the school they adhere to, no matter their understanding and coaching abilities concerning multireligion training.<sup>21</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The development of understanding of religious pluralism and multifaith education most likely stems from the paradigm error of people in studying religion. They study religion by studying the reality of religious people who are considered to be a representation of religion itself.

Theologia religionum aims to build a bridge of cooperation, its perspective is to lead to conclusions that are not only principal and theoretical, but involve concrete steps. So theology religionum boils down to two branches, namely dialogue and collaboration between religions. Theologia religionum is not intended to overcome differences between religions, but only to give positive meaning to these religions so that these differences are truly positively accepted as a blessing and a gift from God.

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<sup>20</sup> Jerry Pillay and Jonathan Womack. "The correlation and separation of academic theology and the local church." *Studia Historiae Ecclesiae* Vol.44, No.3 (2018): 1-16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/3403>; Recky Pangumbahas dan Oey Natanael Winanto. "Membaca Kembali Pandangan Moralitas Postmodernism Untuk Konteks Pendidikan Kristen (Re-Reading The Worldview Of Postmodernism Morality For The Context Of Christian Education)". *QUAERENS: Journal of Theology and Christianity Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2021): 73-84. <https://doi.org/10.46362/quaerens.v3i1.33>.

<sup>21</sup> Cornelia Roux. "Religion In Education: Perceptions And Practices." *Scriptura* 89 (2005): 305.



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