

# Dealing with Diversity

Religion, Globalization, Violence, Gender  
and Disaster in Indonesia

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## INTER-RELIGIOUS STUDIES: RECONCILING THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

*Yahya Wijaya*

Studies in religion can broadly be divided into 2 different approaches: theology and religious studies. Theology, the oldest model of studying religion, can shortly be defined as *fides quaerens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding)<sup>1</sup> or the logic of the faith in God. Whilst many cultural scientists understand theology as a kind of exclusive language within a particular religious community and therefore lacking in scientific accountability,<sup>2</sup> today's academic theologians would argue that in contemplating the faith of a particular religious community, theology pays proper attention to scientific considerations. Theological works in fact may include scientific research covering both empirical study and literature review as well as fresh reflection on contemporary events. In this sense, theology should not be confused with traditional dogmatics. However, it is true that a theological discourse reflects

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<sup>1</sup> As a medieval theologian, Anselm of Canterbury, names it (cf. Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans, 1991), 2.)

<sup>2</sup> For instance, Amin Abdullah, *Studi Agama: Normativitas atau Historisitas?* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2002 (1996)), 30.

primarily perspectives and experiences of a particular religious community.

Once claimed to be the queen of sciences in European public discourse, the position of theology today is much weaker. As the number of churchgoers drops steadily, schools of theology in many European countries fail to attract enough students. Some of them have to merge with neighbouring theological schools with a similar problem.<sup>3</sup> Many others have to broaden their interest, to relate the study of religious belief to other academic disciplines, such as economics, politics, arts, history and even sport studies. The pressure is also strong for many schools of theology to leave behind the traditional, single-religious perspective and to employ instead methods of social sciences, as well as to looking at the issues faced by many religions beside the dominant one. The latter phenomenon has stimulated the significant growth of the discipline of religious studies, which is becoming a crucial counterpart for theology in European theological schools, many of whom have even been renamed schools (or departments) of theology *and religious studies*. Fiona Bowies defines religious studies as a phenomenological method of studying religion “with as little comment and judgment as possible”.<sup>4</sup>

In Indonesia, the traditional approach of studying religious belief from single religious perspective is still popular, as religious communities are still very alive. Schools of Christian theology and parallel institutions of other religions continue to function as centres for doctrinal learning, responding particularly to the religious leadership needs of the related communities. However, the interest is high among Indonesian Christian theologians to develop contextual theologies that

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<sup>3</sup> For instance, schools of theology in Kampen, Leiden and Utrecht, the Netherlands, are recently amalgamated, forming the Protestant Theological University.

<sup>4</sup> Fiona Bowie, *The Anthropology of Religions* (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 5.

contemplate the uniqueness of the Indonesian social context, which includes its multicultural nature. For that purpose, the inclusion of elements of religious studies in the study of theology is inevitable. This fosters the development of a theology of religions.<sup>5</sup> Whilst it is still a (Christian) theological perspective, theology of religions starts to take account of other religious perspectives seriously and sympathetically. The study of theology of religions has indeed contributed to the transformation of other areas of theology, including those of mission and social ethics.

At the same time, the blooming of religious studies in Europe and America has also influenced the Indonesian academic sphere. Religious studies has become an important part of the learning process in Christian theological seminaries and Islamic religious institutions, as well as in secular ones. The concern of religious studies, namely “to study religions more descriptively than normatively”,<sup>6</sup> makes them potential resources for projects of contextual theology. As Amin Abdullah argues, religious studies with their phenomenological approach, can reduce the tendency to particularism that is often implied in the traditional theological approach.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, religious studies need the help of theology to make them relevant for religious communities. The development of religious studies therefore does not necessarily take the form of either confrontation against or substitution for theology. The relations of the two disciplines can be constructive rather than competitive. This is particularly important for Indonesia, where most theologians are also respectable figures in their religious communities. I

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. an explanation concerning theology of religions by Pieterella van Doorn-Harder, “Studi Agama-agama dan Posisinya di Sekolah-sekolah Teologi Protestan di Indonesia”, *Jurnal Teologi Gema Duta Wacana* 52: 69-71.

<sup>6</sup> As Alwi Shihab mentioned in his opening speech in the ICRS’s international conference in Yogyakarta, January 14, 2007. Pieterella van Doorn-Harder defines religious studies as the discipline that studies religions from the outside, while theology does it from the inside (“Studi Agama-agama dan Posisinya di Sekolah-sekolah Teologi Protestan di Indonesia”, 67).

<sup>7</sup> Amin Abdullah, *Studi Agama: Normativitas atau Historisitas?* 38.

would argue that a constructive interaction between theology and religious studies in the context of a multicultural society like Indonesia should produce inter-religious studies. By this I mean types of religious studies that not only contemplate the particular context of plurality, but also take account of theological perspectives offered by various religious traditions and communities. Inter-religious studies, hence, are to be accountable in the forum of social science, and at the same time speak understandably to religious communities.

### **Why Single-Religious Approaches are Not Enough**

The claim that we need inter-religious studies implies that approaches based on the perspectives of a single religion are not enough. There are reasons why it is so. First, people of different religions interact intensively in public life, the workplace, education and even family. The lack of an inter-religious perspective has caused so much unnecessary tension in Indonesian public life, such as in the cases of the laws concerning marriage and religious education. According to the Indonesian law, a marriage is legal only when carried out in a religious ceremony. The law assumes that a marriage involves a man and a woman of the same religion. However, that is not always the case. When someone wants to get married to his/her loved one who is of a different religion, which religious ceremony is to be chosen? Many religious institutions employ an exclusive policy regarding marriage, requiring those who are married according to its tradition not to partake in any ceremony of another religion. Such a policy often causes difficulties to those getting married, and inconvenience to the multi-religious families involved in the ceremonies. The challenge therefore is obvious: for religious institutions to revise their exclusive policy in such a multi-religious society. Since the exclusive policy is based on a theological reasoning, a new theological foundation that is informed by an inter-

religious perspective is needed for constructing an alternative policy that is more sensitive to plurality.

In terms of religious education in Indonesian schools, the law, legalized after a long and painful controversy, requires educational institutions to provide teachers and offer religious courses according to the religions embraced by the related students. It is thus compulsory for Christian schools with Muslim students to offer a course on Islam and to hire Muslim teachers to teach that course. In most Christian schools, founded on the basis of the traditional concept of mission or evangelism, Christianity is the only religion taught in the religious education courses, which are compulsory for all students regardless of their own religions. Such a single religion policy has long been accused of becoming a systematic method of converting students to Christianity. It is such accusations that are behind the initiative to construct a new religious education law. Apart from the controversy over the law, the need for a new policy on religious education that is more sensitive to multiculturalism is fair enough. On the part of the Christian educational institutions, this means the need to refer to a new concept of mission with a theologically sound perspective of the inter-religious context of Indonesia.

A second reason why a single religious approach is inadequate is the experience of the Indonesian people with social conflicts, which demonstrates that when religious elements are involved, the conflicts tend to be more difficult to solve. In such cases, a single religion approach cannot play the role of a neutral and objective facilitator for overcoming the conflict. On the other hand, a multi-religious team of mediators often fails to work beyond the pragmatic level, because of the lack of a shared philosophical foundation.

Other reasons for challenging single religious approaches include the shared experiences of people from different religions in facing various crises. The economic crisis started in 1997, a series of natural disasters

hitting the country since 2004, and the terrorist attacks in Bali and Jakarta brought together people of different religious communities. In all those circumstances, people suffered together, struggled for survival together and shared the same feelings of fear and insecurity. Religious differences do not exclude one from those shared experiences. At the same time, people of different religions also learn that what is urgently needed when sufferings come is an inter-religious collaboration instead of religious favouritism.

On the part of the Christian community, it is obvious that Christian theology promotes themes of social solidarity very seriously. Those themes have moved Christians to develop a strong tradition of helping the poor and the suffering, regardless of religious differences. Yet, such a theology of the helper does not accurately reflect the experience of Christians who, side by side with their non-Christian neighbours, are themselves poor and the suffering, who also receive help and sympathy from other people including non-Christians. There is a need for a theology that not only acknowledges togetherness in pain with those of other faiths, but also is thankful for the presence of other believers, both as fellow sufferers and as helpers.

### **Inter-Religious Perspectives and Areas of Theology**

The contribution of inter-religious studies for the development of a contextual theology would transform almost all areas of theology.

#### *Ethics*

In the area of social ethics, issues such as human rights, political management, social welfare, environment, corruption, and democracy have been extensively dealt with both conceptually and practically by various religious groups in Indonesia. No theological perspective can adequately address these issues without taking account of the perspectives of other religions. The same can be said regarding the area of professional ethics, including ethics in business, biomedicine, law,

information technology, and the media. Moreover, those working in those fields experience daily interactions with people who hold different paradigms of morality based on different religions and different cultures. For instance, in Indonesia it is almost impossible for a Christian doctor to avoid working with colleagues of different religions and serving non-Christian patients. In such situation, when a doctor has to make a moral decision in relation to his/her profession, Christian moral paradigms cannot be the only reference point, particularly if it is ill-informed of the moral perspectives of other religions. The situation in business is not much different. The Indonesian business sector is an absolutely plural context, where values rooted in Confucianism, Islam, Buddhism and Christianity are interwoven. A theological approach to business that does not consider the moral concepts of other religions will fail to understand the complexity of the business realm.

One significant religious ethical movement is taking place in the economic sector, namely the rise of Islamic economics. Despite being based on a particular religious tradition, the concept of Islamic economics has attracted major corporations and financial institutions to accommodate its practices. However, such seemingly positive responses from the business sector tend to be more pragmatic than ethical, merely to broaden the market scope so as to include members of the community embracing that religious tradition.

As with other religious ethical concepts, Islamic economics actually offers ethical principles that are universal in nature and thus are in accord with economic ethics based in other religious traditions. Those principles include “resource utilization, compensation, efficiency, professionalism, sufficiency, equal opportunity, freedom, cooperation, competition, equilibrium, solidarity and symmetric information”.<sup>8</sup> Islamic economics therefore is capable of contributing to the shaping of

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<sup>8</sup> See: P3EI UII Yogyakarta, *Ekonomi Islam* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2008), 65-74.

a more ethical economic life in society at large. However, its exclusively single religious language narrows its influence to the Muslim community only. Adding interreligious perspectives to the study on Islamic economics would enhance its effectiveness as well as its fundamental philosophy. Christian theology, in particular, has abundant resources in economic ethics that would both support and test out the ideas implied in Islamic economics, to make the latter more accountable and communicable in the multicultural context of society.

In the political sector, Indonesian inter-religious leaders have recently (early 2011) issued an important ethical warning. Responding to what many people see as the failures of the government in fighting against corruption and protecting people from violent acts by extremist groups, leaders from Islamic, Christian, Buddhist, and other religious institutions declared one voice of criticism, warning the government about its inconsistency with regard to its own promises. The content of the declaration is actually not too exceptional. In fact, political analysts and NGO activists had issued similar statements. What makes the voice of those interreligious leaders distinctive is that it is based on ethical commitments rooted in different religious resources. Those leaders have demonstrated that interreligious ethical inquiries can produce a powerful political ethics that is free from partisan interests.

### *Hermeneutics*

The use of inter-religious studies is also crucial in the area of hermeneutics. Intolerant and insensitive attitudes of religious people are often based on their commitment to particularistic statements found in their sacred texts. Other religious people find it a dilemma: on the one hand there is a social need to be open and tolerant; on the other hand there is the religious demand, based on the holy book, to separate themselves from followers of other religions. The fact is there are abundant resources for pluralism and tolerance in the sacred texts of all

religions, waiting to be explored.<sup>9</sup> Along with post-colonial, feminist, and liberationist approaches to hermeneutics, an inter-religious hermeneutics can provide alternative ways of understanding the sacred texts more contextually.

Indonesian biblical scholar, Robert Setio,<sup>10</sup> argues that Christian theological scholars have in fact employed religious studies, more specifically a branch of it: history of religions, since post World War II to develop the so called biblical theology, as an attempt to treat the Bible more integrally. For Setio, biblical theology offers a solution to the problems that result from the conflict between theological scholars subscribing to historical criticism, hermeneutics and ordinary Christians who had been used to an uncritical acceptance of scriptures. Whilst historical criticism methods are often accused of concentrating too much on the literary details of the sacred texts at the expense of their message, biblical theology enables a critical study of the Bible without jeopardizing faith in its messages. The theological use of history of religions in the post-World War II period, according to Setio, has helped theologians to reinterpret the idea of the uniqueness of Israel as the chosen people with a new perspective that is more sympathetic and accountable on the roles and positions of other peoples. Setio goes on to suggest that the theological use of religious studies is required not only in responding to interreligious contexts, but also in being aware of the diversity within Christian theology itself.

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Theo Witkamp, "Menuju Suatu Identitas Terbuka", *Jurnal Teologi Gema Duta Wacana* 47, 1-14. See also John Hick, "The Next Step Beyond Dialogue" in *The Myth of Religious Superiority: Multifaith Explorations of Religious Pluralism*, ed. Paul Knitter (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005), 9.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Setio, "Teologi dan Studi Agama-agama: Sebuah Pelajaran dari Studi Perjanjian Pertama" in Hendri Wijayatsih et al., *Memahami Kebenaran Yang Lain Sebagai Upaya Pembaharuan Hidup Bersama* (Yogyakarta: TPK/UKDW/Mission 21, 2010), 215-235.

Karel Steenbrink<sup>11</sup> urges religious scholars to promote what he calls peace theology, which he defines as a study of religions focusing on the harmony between religions. Steenbrink's peace theology starts with initiating a tradition of inter-scriptural readings. He argues that interreligious social and humanitarian projects are not enough to stimulate positive sentiments towards other religions. He believes that inter-textual readings of different sacred texts by people of different religions is the most effective way of inspiring religious people to respect other religions. Steenbrink gives an example from his own personal experience when he, as a Dutch Christian, applied to join the Islamic *pesantren* (learning community) of Gontor without intention of conversion. There he was asked to read the Qur'anic text of Al-Ikhlâs 112, mentioning that God has neither child nor parents, and to give response to that verse from the perspective of his Christian faith. It was precisely by reading that Qur'anic text that he was able to explain to the Muslim audience a complicated biblical theology of the Son of God and hence helped to clarify the common misunderstanding among Muslims on that issue.

### *Doctrine*

Inter-religious projects are often advised to be limited to the domain of ethics, and to avoid particularly the area of doctrine, which is considered too sensitive to penetrate. However, doctrinal reformulation and reinterpretation are necessary since most religious doctrines including that of Christianity and Islam reflect contexts of relatively less multicultural societies in the past. In renewing religious doctrines in the context of a multicultural society, it is imperative to pay serious attention to findings of inter-religious studies. Inter-religiously well-

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<sup>11</sup> Karel Steenbrink, "Membaca Bersama Alkitab dan Al-Quran: Renungan Terhadap Beberapa Pengalaman di Indonesia dan Belanda" in Hendri Wijayatsih et al., *Memahami Kebenaran Yang Lain Sebagai Upaya Pembaharuan Hidup Bersama*, 290-306.

informed religious doctrines are important, not only to give a strong reference for a peaceful social life within a multicultural society, but also to counter the use, abuse or misuse of religious doctrines for justifying acts of intolerance.

One example of a serious doctrinal reinterpretation with an interreligious perspective has been attempted by a group of Indonesian Muslim scholars in a collaborative work titled *Fiqih Lintas Agama* (Inter-religious Dogma)<sup>12</sup>, published by Paramadina Foundation in cooperation with the Asia Foundation. *Fiqih Lintas Agama* (FLA) challenges uncritical uses of traditional Islamic dogmas that overlook their relatedness to particular social and cultural contexts. According to the authors, such non-contextual dogmas lead to narrow minded social and political ideas. The attempt to return to the Jakarta Charter,<sup>13</sup> which requires Indonesian Muslims to practice Shari'a as positive law, is an example of such narrow-mindedness.

According to FLA, Islam assumes that the core of all religions is the same, and all prophets are like children of one father but different mothers. The differences between religions are part of the nature of God's creative work, which dislikes total sameness. The authors argue that the Qur'an celebrates plurality as an opportunity to compete in doing goodness, living in peaceful coexistence, struggling for justice and working for fairness. The Qur'an, thus, is unique in the sense that it contains all-inclusive teachings respecting other religious beliefs and their prophets.

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<sup>12</sup> Mun'im A Sirry, ed., *Fiqih Lintas Agama: Membangun Masyarakat Inklusif-Pluralis* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2004).

<sup>13</sup> The Jakarta Charter is one of the drafts of Pancasila, the ideological state foundation of Indonesia. The difference between the Jakarta Charter and the then accepted draft is that the Charter mentions the obligation of Muslims to fulfill their religious requirements. In the committee that prepared the state foundation, that draft was rejected not only by non-Muslim representatives but also by Muslim nationalist ones.

FLA suggests an understanding of the terms “Islam” and “Muslim” first of all in their generic meanings, not in the spirit of sectarianism or communalism. In this sense, Islam means total submission to the One God, and Muslim means the attitude of total submission to the purity, holiness and truth of God. Such an attitude is basically in accord with natural law, and therefore is not necessarily related to a particular religious institution. “Islam” and “Muslim” thus cover all people who show total submission to God, regardless of religious affiliation. The origin of the terms, according to the authors, should be traced back to the story about the debate regarding the religion of Abraham. In that story, the Qur’an asserts that Abraham is neither Jewish nor Christian. The Qur’an employs the terms *hanif* and “Muslim” for Abraham in their generic sense, precisely to reject sectarian and exclusivist claims raised by some Jews and Christians regarding Abraham. In this generic interpretation, “Islam” refers not to a particular religious institution, but to all religions, since the call to submission and obedience to God is at their heart. FLA’s authors thus argue that the Qur’an’s claim that Islam is the only true religion must be understood in this generic sense.

FLA also responds to the controversy among Muslims in Indonesia concerning the use of the term “Allah” by Christians. Some groups of Muslims as well as a particular group of Christians raised their objections, arguing that the term refers exclusively to the Muslim God. They ask (some even warn) that the Indonesian Bible Society and Christian leaders should stop using “Allah” and find instead another term consistent with the biblical language. Several charismatic and evangelical groups in Indonesia use the term “Yahweh” instead.

FLA, however, rejects such a sectarian interpretation, asserting that “Allah” is nothing but the Arabic word referring to the idea of the true God, the Only One God, to whom all religions address their worship and praise. The core meaning of that term is a rejection of the worship of false idols, not necessarily a rejection of a particular religion. Supporting

FLA's argument, historical explorations of the term "Allah" by Muslim scholar, Nur Kholis Setiawan,<sup>14</sup> show that Arab Christians used the term "Allah" even in the pre-Islamic era to refer to God as the creator of heaven and earth. Setiawan therefore suggests that instead of defending such an exclusive claim, Muslims should admit that many of their dogmatic heritages are actually shared with people of other faiths, particularly Christians and Jews.

On the Christian side, doctrinal reinterpretation has also been attempted, for instance in the work of the Sri Lankan Methodist theologian, Wesley Ariarajah. In his book, *The Bible and People of Other Faiths* (WCC: 1985), which has been translated into Indonesian,<sup>15</sup> Ariarajah suggests a reinterpretation of the doctrine of Christology that proclaims Jesus as the only way of salvation. He contends that the claim of the uniqueness of Jesus should be understood as a language of faith rather than as a social statement. That language of faith is originally meant as a defence of the Christian community against the pressure to prove the authenticity of their faith. That claim, according to Ariarajah, also indicates a shift in the community's centre of faith from God to Christ, which is parallel to the Buddhists' adoration of Gautama. For Ariarajah the claim of the uniqueness of Jesus thus is not relevant for dealing with other religions. The real call for Christians, he believes, is not to make exclusive claims, but to show a clear commitment to open their lives to other people.

### *Missiology*

The need to learn more from inter-religious studies in the area of mission is obvious. There have been too many clashes in mission

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<sup>14</sup> Nur Kholis Setiawan, "Kata Allah dalam Tradisi Agama Semitik" in Hendri Wijayatsih et al., *Memahami Kebenaran Yang Lain sebagai Upaya Pembaharuan Hidup Bersama*, 98-111.

<sup>15</sup> The Indonesian title is *Alkitab dan Orang-orang Berkepercayaan Lain* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1987)

practices between different religions that cause conflicts in the relations between religious communities. The challenge today is how to develop a concept of mission that promotes projects of partnership rather than competition between religions.

It is a historical fact that Indonesian churches are the fruit of missionary works based in Western countries. There is no doubt that the missionary works covered not only church planting projects but also the pioneering of social services, particularly in education and health. Today, mainstream Christian denominations tend to separate social involvement from religious propaganda, and give priority to the first. However, Christian social projects are often accused of being a tricky instrument of Christianization, given the past experience with the missionary method that blended social and religious projects. Non-Christians thus often give hostile reactions, ranging from political moves to physical attacks in resistance to Christian social projects.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, there are Christian groups and individuals whose concept of mission is still based on the conventional understanding of the Great Commission. They are obviously unsatisfied with the shift in the mainstream Christian concept of mission. The new missiology, which is more sensitive to the existence of other religions, therefore needs a theological explanation that not only pays particular attention to the dignity of other religions, but also offers better interpretations of the sacred texts that have served as the foundation of Christian mission for centuries.

In this case, an Indonesian scholar in missiology, Djoko Prasetyo AW,<sup>17</sup> recommends Theo Sundermeier's concept of convivial mission. In that concept, tolerance is neither an instrument nor the goal of mission, but an entrance to the interreligious encounter that aims at a

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<sup>16</sup> See: Abdur Munir Mulkhan, "Persepsi Muslim Terhadap Aksi-aksi Sosial Kristiani", *Gema Teologi*, 32:1 (2008), 63-72.

<sup>17</sup> See: Djoko Prasetyo A.W., "'Konvivenz' dan Theologia Misi Interkultural Menurut Theo Sundermeier", *Gema Teologi*, 32:1 (2008), 97-115.

better sense of living together. One important step of convivial missiology is intercultural hermeneutics, which is a method of interpreting the sacred texts with an awareness of cultural differences between the background of the texts and the reader's situation, as well as between the reader and the people he/she encounters. In intercultural hermeneutics, interpreters consider and respect the perception of people of other cultures and religious traditions, particularly those who were targeted by conventional missions. Convivial missiology thus starts with intercultural hermeneutics as a part of intercultural encounters directed to intercultural living.

Studies in the Islamic concept of *dakwah* tend to go to the same direction. The Department of *Dakwah* at the State Islamic University Sunan Kalidjaga, for instance, encourages reinterpretation of the conventional concept of *dakwah* as a strategy to convert non-Muslims into Islam. That institution promotes an understanding of *dakwah* as aiming at the betterment of society at large rather than the expansion of the Muslim community. The implementation of *dakwah* therefore should take the form of Muslim participation in the process of community development.<sup>18</sup> Although differences between Christian missiology and Islamic theology of *dakwah* do exist and should not be overlooked, I notice opportunities produced by these studies that their encounters in public life could be supportive of each other.

### *Christian Education*

In the area of religious education, besides the need to respond to the controversy over the law on religious education as explained above, it is important for educational institutions to construct pluralistic curricula and syllabi for religious education that transcends the traditional spirit of

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<sup>18</sup> See: Kees de Jong, "Pekabaran Injil dalam Konteks Masyarakat Multikultural Pluralistik" in Hendri Wijayatsih et al., *Memahami Kebenaran Yang Lain sebagai Upaya Pembaharuan Hidup Bersama*, 334.

evangelism. Inter-religious studies would certainly contribute to providing basic elements of such curricula and syllabi.

Jozef Hehanussa,<sup>19</sup> who teaches a course on Religious Traditions and Plurality at Duta Wacana, admits that until recently the practice of Christian education in Indonesia had not employed the findings of a theology of religions to help it become more relevant. Hehanussa argues that instead of imposing dogmatic beliefs, Christian education should start from understanding the reality, which is culturally plural. He suggests that an understanding of a religiously plural reality should become the perspective to interpret dogmatic issues. This would reverse the approach used in traditional Christian education.

### *Pastoral Studies*

The case of inter-religious marriage, which I mention above, signifies the need for inter-religious perspectives in dealing with broader life issues in pastoral care and religious rites. Beside wedding ceremonies, funerals are also occasions of social gathering and religious rites that normally include family and community members whose religious and cultural backgrounds may vary. It is obvious that the multicultural family would expect forms of comfort beyond a reflection that emphasizes an exclusive concept of salvation.

Emmanuel Lartey suggests the use of David Tracy's method of revised correlation in doing theological reflection as part of pastoral theology. Tracy revises Paul Tillich's correlational method, which relates questions that arise from contemporary situation to answers found in the Christian tradition. According to Tracy, the Christian tradition also implies questions and the contemporary situation also offer answers.<sup>20</sup> The relations between the two, therefore, should be

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<sup>19</sup> Jozef Hehanussa, "Pendidikan Agama Kristen Dalam Masyarakat Majemuk", *Jurnal Teologi Gema Duta Wacana* 58 (2003), 93-110.

<sup>20</sup> Emmanuel Lartey, *Pastoral Theology in an Intercultural World* (Werrington: Epworth, 2006), 77.

interactional rather than unidirectional. However, I would argue that in dealing with multicultural contexts, such as a multi-faith family, the religious element involved may include not only the Christian tradition but also those of other religions, which also raise questions and suggest answers. In this case, interreligious studies would certainly be a good partner to pastoral theology in identifying and interpreting questions and answers coming up from non-Christian traditions.

### **Inter-Religious Educational Projects as a Start**

Awareness of the need for a contextual theology that is well-equipped with inter-religious perspectives has driven the Faculty of Theology of Duta Wacana Christian University, to build relationships with institutions of other religions, particularly Islamic ones, through the Faculty's Centre for the Study of Religions. The programmes of that centre include collaborative research projects with Islamic institutions and an annual two-week intensive course on Islam for church leaders to learn about Islam from first hand resources, namely Muslim scholars and leaders of Islamic organizations. At almost the same time, the State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, also established its prestigious Dialogue Centre to develop research and other services related to interreligious encounters and cooperation.

The Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS-Yogya) is a more advanced kind of academic collaboration involving Christian (Duta Wacana), Islamic (UIN Sunan Kalijaga) and secular (Gadjah Mada) academic institutions in Yogyakarta. The project promotes methodologies of interreligious studies that reconcile and accommodate both theological approaches and those employed in religious studies (sociology, anthropology, political science, history, philosophy, history and psychology of religion, etc.). Since religious studies speak more to the academic public, whilst theology speaks more to the related religious community, the project is expected to give rise to religious studies that

are theologically accountable, and theologies that are well-informed by religious studies.

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