

FAITH AND UNITY IN TIMES OF POLARIZATION: AN INDONESIAN PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to discover the significance and urgency of the echoes of the Council of Nicaea in the context of polarization in Indonesia. Polarization in Indonesia occurs in a double way, namely the polarization of Indonesian society due to identity politics and polarization in Christianity in Indonesia. Using a qualitative approach, the author finds that the ideas of faith and unity echoing from the Council of Nicaea are prospective for the practice of religious moderation and the reformulation of the Common Understanding of the Christian Faith in Indonesia. To achieve the purpose of writing, this article is organized into several main parts. First, an explanation of the complexity of polarization in Indonesian society. Second, the polarization of Christianity in Indonesia. Third, the inspiration of the Council of Nicaea and Religious Moderation in Indonesia. Fourth, about the theological response to polarization in Indonesia which rests on efforts to reformulate the Common Understanding of the Christian Faith in Indonesia and the echoes of the Council of Nicaea in it.

POLARIZATION IN INDONESIA

The polarization of Indonesian society has strengthened lately due to various triggering factors, especially political factors. Indonesia is the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. Statistical data for 2024 shows that Indonesia has a total population of 280 million people, with more than 207 million (87.2%) of the population being Muslim.¹ Christianity in Indonesia is in the range of 19.6 million people (6.9%), Catholics as many as 8.4 million people (2.9%), Hindus 1.7%, Buddhists 0.7% and Confucianism 0.05%. However, Indonesia is not a Muslim country, or a religious country. The founders of the nation have succeeded in exploring the noble values of the Indonesian nation and formulating Pancasila (five precepts) as the basis of the state. Pancasila is the state ideology that underlies the entire implementation of national

¹ Central Statistics Agency, *Religion in Indonesia 2024*

and state life in Indonesia. The five precepts are: 1. Belief in the one and only God; 2. Just and civilized humanity; 3. The unity of Indonesia; 4. Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives; 5. Social justice for the whole of the people of Indonesia. In addition to Pancasila as the basis and ideology of the state, Indonesia also lives the national motto *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* (unity in diversity).

As a democratic country, leadership changes at the national and local levels are carried out through elections. The momentum of the election for the governor of Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia in 2017 is seen as one of the important moments of polarization of Indonesian society. One of the main factors in the polarization of Indonesian society is identity politics. In this paper, the author uses the term "identity politicization" instead of identity politics. Identity politicization refers to the practice of using identity sentiment in power struggles by elites. The use of the term identity politicization is different from identity politics in the awareness that there are still movements that use "identity politics" in humanitarian struggles. The term identity politicization is used to distinguish it from these humanitarian movements.

Identity politicization is now the most dangerous threat to democracy in Indonesia. Not only threatening democracy in Indonesia, but even identity politics threatening the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. How not, its effectiveness, which has managed to find momentum since the 2017 Jakarta Regional Head Election (Pilkada), is seen as the most powerful weapon for the power struggle. Facing the 2024 political year, President Joko Widodo has repeatedly emphasized the dangers of identity politics in the 2024 general election in his presence on the consolidation agendas of several political parties in Indonesia. President Joko Widodo is well aware that a lot of the nation's energy is drained just to overcome the effects of identity politicization that has aggressively penetrated into the Indonesian public space.

Indonesian political thinkers often refer to 2017 as the year of the emergence of identity politicization on the surface of the Indonesian political stage. Lecturer of FISIP UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta and Director of Indonesian Political Indicators, Burhanuddin Muhtadi mentioned that the 2017 Jakarta Regional Election is an electoral political anomaly in Indonesia. How not, the pair of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama and Djarot Saiful Hidayat, who always topped surveys conducted by various survey institutions, actually lost later with only 42% of the votes. Muhtadi revealed the results of a survey after the implementation of the 2017 Jakarta Regional Elections which showed that the most dominant reason (34%) of voters in choosing the governor and deputy governor of Jakarta in 2017 was the reason "*his religion is the same*

as mine". Identity politics in electoral political dynamics in Indonesia, according to Muhtadi, shows the anomalies between rationalism and voter emotionalism in making choices. The population of DKI Jakarta as the majority of the cosmopolitan society, it is proven that most of them do not emphasize rationality as the main consideration in determining political choices, but rather rely on the emotionality played by the sentiment of identity politicization.

Basuki Tjahaja Purnama or Ahok, is indeed a symbol of the others. Muhtadi referred to Ahok as a representation of "the Others", a representation of others with a double minority label. The first is because they are Christians, the second is because they come from ethnic Chinese. The rationality of voters has faded in the face of identity politicization that plays religious and ethnic issues as political sales. In fact, what is quite surprising from the survey conducted by Muhtadi, that although people are very satisfied with Ahok's performance, they will not vote for him because of religious and ethnic differences. Ahok's presence or phenomenon is seen as a threat to the political status quo that has been controlled by a few people. Ahok is seen as quite disruptive to the comfort of access to resources that have been controlled by the elite. This displeasure found its momentum because of Ahok's political carelessness through the Al-Maidah incident.

The Ahok phenomenon spread widely to various other regions in Indonesia, where religious and ethnic identities became the identities that most influenced electoral politics. By choosing DKI Jakarta, North Sumatra, West Kalimantan, North Sulawesi and Maluku as samples, Muhtadi came to the conclusion that ethnic and religious identity is the most dominant influence on the electoral behavior of voters in choosing candidates in the election contest. Especially if the contestants have ethnic and religious differences. Therefore, voters tend to exercise their electoral rights with the main consideration being the similarity of religious and ethnic identity with the chosen candidate. The psychology of voters is realized by the elite. Indonesian people tend to be primordial in choosing and only a few use rationality considerations in choosing. This opens up great opportunities for the politicization of identity, which in the electoral context in Indonesia is religious and ethnic identity, to seize power by the elite.

The Ahok phenomenon has indeed passed along with Ahok's defeat in the 2017 Jakarta Regional Election and the criminal charges that have been imposed on him in the Al-Maidah case. However, after the Ahok phenomenon, which is called an anomaly in Indonesian politics, there are still chronic problems related to segregation and polarization that occur, not only in

the people of DKI Jakarta, but also the Indonesian people in general. After Ahok, Indonesia went through two general election momentum, namely the 2019 and 2024 general elections. The 2019 election that occurred after the Ahok phenomenon by Indonesian political thinkers was greatly influenced by the politicization of identity. Even President Joko Widodo as a charismatic figure who is so loved by the people is not spared from the attack of identity politicization. Included in the dilemma of choosing a vice presidential pair who accompanied him in the 2019 presidential election. The election of K.H. Ma'ruf Amin cannot be separated from the impact of identity politicization, especially religious identity, in this case Islam. The election of K.H. Ma'ruf Amin by Indonesian political thinkers as Joko Widodo's accommodating politics against the politicization of religion for the sake of electoral politics. K.H. Ma'ruf Amin at that time was the Chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) which incidentally was in the vortex of the Ahok case. As the General Chairman of the MUI, he issued a written statement on October 11, 2016 regarding the insult to the Quran and Ulama which has legal consequences in the Al-Maidah case. Not a few nationalists were disappointed with Joko Widodo's accommodative decision which at that time seemed to accommodate the politicization of identity for electoral political interests in order to overcome the attacks on identity politicization addressed to him.

On the other hand, it can be seen that the phenomenon of Ma'ruf Amin in the 2019 Presidential Election shows the penetration and revival of Islamic politics in the political arena in Indonesia. The election of Ma'ruf Amin cannot be separated from the encouragement to Joko Widodo by the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, namely Nahdhatul Ulama (NU). In the final moments of determining the vice presidential candidate, Joko Widodo was faced with two candidates, Mahfud MD and K.H. Ma'ruf Amin. Initially, Joko Widodo had decided on Mahfud MD as a companion. However, the pressures are seen in the threatening statement that NU will withdraw support from Joko Widodo if it chooses Mahfud MD as a companion. The question now is, has Joko Widodo's accommodative politics through the election of K.H. Ma'ruf Amin succeeded in suppressing the movement of identity politicization? The results of the 2019 Presidential Election show that K.H. Ma'ruf Amin has succeeded in increasing Joko Widodo's electability among voters with a Muslim base. Joko Widodo's vote gain increased by 2% from the 2014 presidential election. But is this also directly proportional to Joko Widodo's efforts to suppress the politicization of identity?

The sentiment of identity politicization did not subside in the second term of Joko Widodo's administration even though K.H. Ma'ruf Amin was his deputy. It is inversely

proportional to the hope that with the cooperation of K.H. Ma'ruf Amin, the politicization of identity, especially religious identity, can subside. In fact, several studies show that the politicization of identity in the 2019 election still occurs and even makes the level of democracy in Indonesia experience a very significant decrease. A series of studies show that both on a national scale and in the regions, identity politicization occurs massively. Joko Widodo's efforts to embrace Muslims through the choice of cooperating with K.H. Ma'ruf Amin in fact did not necessarily ease the tension of identity politicization. On the one hand, this strategy succeeded in embracing (reconciling) Joko Widodo with certain Muslim elite groups who were very opposed in his first period. On the other hand, the politicization of Islamic identity still occurs because of the contestation factor among Muslims, namely between radical Islamic groups and moderate Islamic groups. This is certainly well realized by President Joko Widodo. The change in strategy from embracing efforts to law enforcement efforts was carried out later to dampen mass actions that took advantage of the politicization of religious identity to disrupt public order. Extremist-radical community organizations are dissolved by the government. This strategy is considered the most appropriate not to continue to allow extremist groups to play the politicization of religious identity, although it does not necessarily eliminate the politicization of identity.

The politicization of identity that has not subsided with various handling strategies carried out by the government, both policy politics, awareness efforts, cooperation across institutions and community organizations, educational approaches and various other efforts raises a big question mark. What is actually behind the rampant politicization of identity in Indonesia even ahead of the 2024 general election? What are the factors that cause identity politicization to become increasingly rampant and carried out in a structured, systematic and massive manner? Olúfẹmi O. Táíwò, lecturer in philosophy from *Georgetown University* Call *Elite Capture* As the main factor in the change in identity politics from the ideology of humanitarian struggle to a weapon that threatens democracy and the disintegration of the nation-state.² *Elite capture* is a situation in which elites shape the development process according to their own priorities and/or development and utilization of resources for their own interests.³

² Olúfẹmi O. Táíwò, *Elite Capture: How the Powerful Took Over Identity Politics (And Everything Else)* (London: Pluto Press, 2022).

³ Fahd Zulfiqar and Abbas Moosvi, *Understanding Elite Capture*. Pakistan Institute of Development Economics. No. 2022:67. May 2022

When referring to Táíwò's theory and analysis of elite capture, the phenomenon of identity politicization in Indonesia can be understood as a strategy of power struggle for access to resources for the benefit of certain individuals or groups. The Pew Research Center in 2020 conducted The Global God Divide survey. The survey was conducted in 34 countries by interviewing 38,426 people. The results of the survey released on July 21, 2021 put Indonesia at the top of the most religious country. 98% of respondents from Indonesia consider religion important in their lives. This reality is well realized by the elites that religious sentiment has the most potential to be played through the politicization of identity for the struggle for power.

Who Runs the World? Elites. This is the rhetorical question answered by Táíwò himself in his analysis of elite capture. It is no secret that behind every political event in Indonesia there are elite interests that play various strategies to seize power. Just look at the latest phenomenon that occurred in the 2024 general election. This can be seen, among others, through one of the presidential candidates, Anies Baswedan. Anies has become a symbol of identity politicization since his victory which was full of drama of religious politicization in 2017. Anies, who succeeded in politicizing his identity in 2017, and again used the same strategy in the 2024 general election. Despite failing to become president, the strategy of politicizing his identity has proven to be successful in boosting Anies Baswedan's vote in second place and is very significant. It even defeated the nationalist candidate carried by the largest party in Indonesia.

The polarization of Indonesian society is a reality that cannot be separated from the intertwining between globalization, the politicization of identity and the interests of elites in power. Identity politics is closely related to globalization. Bice Maiguashca called globalization and identity politics two inseparable entities and gave birth to division or polarization in society.⁴ Maiguashca sees two main categories in the grouping of understandings that see the close connection between globalization and identity politics. The first is a group that tends to conceptualize the link between globalization and identity politics into a framework *Politics of Solidarity*. While the second group is a group that tends to see identity politics as an expression of *Politics of difference*.⁵ Each thought group has its arguments in seeing the connection between globalization and identity politics.

⁴ Bice Maiguashca, *Globalisation and the 'politics of identity' IR theory through the looking glass of women's reproductive rights activism* in Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca, *Critical Theories, International Relations and 'the Anti-Globalisation Movement' The Politics of Global Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 117.

⁵ Maiguashca, "Globalisation and the politics of identity"

Both conceptualizing identity politics as a politics of solidarity and as a politics of difference, these two conceptualizations both recognize that identity politics is a biological child of globalization. As the biological child of globalization, identity politics has become the ideology of social movements of different people who come together to fight for the common good. Since the term first emerged in the 1970s, identity politics has been synonymous with social struggles or movements around human rights issues. Steph Lawler mentioned that this term was first used in 1979 which refers to the movement for the rights of people with disabilities.⁶ Another view states that the term first appeared in 1977 in the manifesto of *the Combahee River Collective*, a black women's movement.⁷ From this historical background and the lengthy description above, it is clear that identity politics is a new political idea that is used as an ideological alternative to the struggle of human rights movements, as has been mentioned, for example, the gender equality movement, the anti-racism movement, the disability rights movement and so on. How then identity politics as an ideology of the humanitarian movement transformed into a threat to democracy and the disintegration of the nation-state as experienced in Indonesia today? Therefore, Táíwò's idea of the phenomenon of *elite capture* as the main factor in the change of identity politics from the ideology of humanitarian struggle to a weapon that threatens democracy and the disintegration of the nation-state is a significant alternative answer.

The polarization of Indonesian society as a result of the politicization of identity, especially religious, racial, and ethnic identities, is a serious problem in Indonesia. This has an impact on increasing intolerance and fundamentalism, among others. Christianity as a minority group in Indonesia most often experiences persecution and acts of intolerance such as the

⁶ Steph Lawler, *Identity: Sociological Perspectives* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014), 162.

⁷ Olúfémí O. Táíwò, *Elite Capture: How the Powerful Took Over Identity Politics (And Everything Else)* (London: Pluto Press, 2022).

prohibition of worship and even the destruction of houses of worship (churches) have become rampant recently. In the midst of the situation of Indonesian society experiencing extreme polarization, how does Christianity in Indonesia respond to the polarization of Indonesian society? In addition, how is Christianity in Indonesia also polarized? This will be discussed in the next section below.

CHRISTIANITY IN INDONESIA: EXTERNAL CHALLENGES, INTERNAL POLARIZATION

Christianity in Indonesia is a minority. As previously explained, Christianity in Indonesia is in the range of 20 million people or only 7% of the total Indonesian population of 280 million people. As an integral part of the Indonesian nation, the churches in Indonesia understand themselves as citizens equal to the adherents of other religions. The term "creative minority" is often referred to as a model and form of church presence in Indonesia. The term was first used by the British historian, Arnold Toynbee to refer to the spiritual dimension of every society that allows for the continuous renewal of society.

Churches in Indonesia experience quite obvious internal polarization. Richard Siwu classifies the polarization of Christianity in Indonesia into two main groups, namely: ecumenical and evangelical.⁸ Although the context of Siwu's view is Indonesia's situation which is rooted in the experience of the colonial period, the Siwu mapping is still relevant to be used to classify the polarization of Christianity in Indonesia.

The polarization of Christianity in Indonesia cannot be separated from the polarization of global Christianity since the twentieth century. The difference in mission orientation in the body of the Protestant Church after World War II. The transition of society from imperialism and colonialism to a nationalist society is a challenge for Christianity in realizing its mission and calling. Factors before 1961 are important to note to see the map of global Christian

⁸ Richard A. D. Siwu, *Misi dalam Pandangan Ekumenikan dan Evangelical di Asia* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1996).

polarization that also has an impact on Indonesia. In 1910 a mission conference was held in Edinburgh and an institution called *the International Missionary Council* (IMC) was formed. The purpose of the IMC was to examine global issues about missions. Since the formation of the IMC, in 1928 in Jerusalem (Israel) for the first time the IMC held a conference. At the conference, the mission was no longer understood only in the context of the expansion of Christianity and efforts to conquer non-Christian religions. This is the beginning of the attitude of openness to the truth in other religions. The second conference in 1938 in Tambaram (India) produced a theological understanding in which all social, political, and cultural issues are the object of the church's mission activities. In 1947 the third IMC conference was held in Whitby. One of the significant outcomes of the Whitby conference (Canada) was the establishment of *the World Council of Churches* (WCC).

However, after the Wheaton congress (1966) and the DGD General Assembly in Uppsala (1968), there began to be polarization in the midst of the DGD which was referred to as the ecumenical movement and the evangelical movement. This dispute occurred due to two things: (1) the incorporation of the IMC into the DGD and (2) a shift in theological conceptions. Conservative Christians objected to the IMC's inclusion in the WCC. This is due to the shift in theological insight from a "church-centered" understanding to a "world-centered" understanding. Conservative (evangelical) Christians eventually broke away from the DGD and formed a new organization.

The global Christian situation has also affected the polarization of Christianity in Indonesia which is evident through ecclesiastical institutions in Indonesia. One of them is the Fellowship of Churches in Indonesia (PGI). PGI, formerly known as DGI (Indonesian Council of Churches), was established in 1950 with the main goal of establishing the One Christian Church in Indonesia. This grand vision when formulated in 1950 did not have a clear form. Mainly about how the concept of the One Christian Church is. Later in its development, through

the General Assemblies, begin to find the form and concept of the intended One Christian Church. For example, the idea of "spiritual oneness in Christ", not "structural oneness". In the development of the 1950s-1970s, the importance of structural oneness began to be considered.⁹ Therefore, it began to think about the uniformity of teachings, liturgies, and church systems. However, documents such as the Church System and the Common Understanding of the Faith, at least until 1967, have not been accepted by PGI member churches.

The impasse of structural oneness as mentioned above, gave birth to the thoughts and ideas of churches in Indonesia to realize oneness through a common call in ministry. This functional approach was developed in the 1970s, which among other things led to an emphasis on diversity in togetherness (oneness in church diversity), and the importance of setting an agenda of common calling, understanding of common faith, and acceptance of differences between churches, as well as its oikoumenical institutional support.

This development finally gave birth to the Five Documents of Church Oneness: Principles of Joint Vocation (PTPB), Common Understanding of the Christian Faith (PBIK), Charter of Mutual Recognition and Mutual Acceptance (PSMSM), PGI Constitution and Towards Theological Independence, Power and Funds (MKTD2). The five documents, called the Five Documents of Church Oneness (LDKG), were stipulated by the churches in the General Assembly of the X DGI, in October 1984 in Ambon. The XIII General Assembly of PGI in 2000 in Palangkaraya combined the PSMSM document with MKTD2 to form the Ecclesiastical Oikoumene, so that it became four documents that are all called the Church Oneness Document (DKG).

In the DKG, PGI formulates the crises and challenges faced by churches in Indonesia. There are three main crises, namely: the national crisis, the ecological crisis, and the crisis of church oneness. And challenges are challenges of digital culture. The national crisis that is now

⁹ PGI, *Dokumen Keesaan Gereja 2019-2024* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2019).

being faced is evident in the alarming symptom where political power is solely aimed at serving the interests of oneself or one's own group. There the goal of democracy is hijacked by politicians who use identity sentiments, including extreme religious views and transactional politics shrouded in democratic procedures and mechanisms. The national crisis is also seen in the rampant corruption, even in the midst of people's poverty, and the still rampant human rights violations, while human rights violations in the past have not been processed.

The ecological crisis is evident in the symptoms of the depletion of natural resources to satisfy unlimited greed. People's land and land, including those belonging to indigenous communities, are confiscated and repurposed. Common sources of life (water, land, sea, forest) are controlled and exploited. Biodiversity is destroyed by the practice of large-scale plantation monoculture. Meanwhile, environmental pollution by industrial waste and plastic has reached a worrying stage, because Indonesia is the second largest contributor of plastic waste after China.

The oneness crisis is also suspected to have befallen churches in Indonesia. This appears in the symptom of how "oneness in action" has not yet become the common understanding that guides churches to carry out their calling of witness and ministry. Churches still pay too much attention to individual piety and less emphasis on socio-ecological piety. This crisis of oneness is closely related to the issue of theological independence, power, and funding. Theological schools have not paid enough attention to the development of oikoumenical theology, while existing oikoumenist forums and networks are not able to manage conflicts between churches, let alone empower churches to be agents of change in society.

Churches in Indonesia are also facing serious challenges brought by the digital revolution. The "disruptive" effects caused by the digital revolution have not only had a great influence on the business and political world (the spread of hoaxes, hate twists, black campaigns), which have resulted in dangerous polarization in society, but are also suspected of

changing the atmosphere of our culture which has a wide impact on church life. Technological advancement cannot be stopped. However, without the maturity to manage it, the technological revolution that gave birth to the digital culture can scatter the Indonesian nation.

In the midst of the crises and challenges faced by churches in Indonesia, the strengthening of internal polarization of churches has also occurred. In addition to PGI, ecumenical institutions have also emerged such as the Church and Evangelical Institutions in Indonesia (PGLII) or also known as the Indonesian Evangelical Fellowship (PII). In addition to PGLII/PII, institutions such as the Fellowship of Pentecostal Churches in Indonesia (PGPI), the Indonesian Baptist Fellowship (PBI), and several other institutions were also formed.

Various ecumenical institutions in Indonesia crystallize the polarization of Christianity in Indonesia into two major groups as mentioned earlier, namely ecumenical (PGI) and evangelical (PGLII, PGPI, etc.). In addition to differences in teachings and mission orientation, it is also interesting to observe the tendency to win public and government sympathy about the existence of new ecumenical institutions that want to be taken into account in the context of national life in Indonesia.

THE COUNCIL OF NICAIA AND RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN INDONESIA

The national crisis is one of the serious challenges faced in Indonesia today. The seriousness of this crisis makes it necessary to deal with it immediately. The national crisis that manifests itself in the form of extreme division of society has resulted in the disintegration of the Indonesian nation. One of the efforts, patterns and strategies developed by the government, especially the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia to overcome this national crisis is through a religious moderation program. The Ministry of Religious Affairs formulates religious moderation as religious attitudes, behaviors, and actions that are not extreme left or

extreme right, and always take a middle position.¹⁰ The thing to emphasize here is a religious pattern and attitude that is fair, and not extreme. The important thing that needs to be underlined here is that what is emphasized is not religious moderation but religion.

Extremism is the main enemy fought by religious moderation. The intended extremism is clearly limited by the Ministry of Religious Affairs by mentioning the extreme right and extreme left. The extreme right refers to religious conservatism, fanaticism, exclusivism, radicalism, fundamentalism, and other groups that read the Religious Scriptures literally. While the extreme left is a secular group. Those who advocate the privatization of religion, those who promote extreme rationalism in the interpretation of Scripture, and those who overemphasize the absolutism of universal freedom, human rights, and individualism.¹¹ These two extremes are the object of religious moderation.

Could the concept and idea of religious moderation also be applicable to the Christian life? In the midst of the internal polarization of Christianity, is it possible that the idea of church moderation can be applied? Isn't it in the context of a multi-crisis Indonesia, contextual church is ecumenical and evangelical church at the same time? From the principles of ecumenicalism, attention can be drawn to the world with various humanitarian dynamics and crises that the church needs to respond to as a call for peace, reconciliation, and unity. But also, churches must not lose the spirit of the Gospel message.

The religious moderation program, although not related at all to the Council of Nicaea, can be seen to have a close spirit. The choice of the city of Nicaea by Emperor Constantine could not be separated from the existence of Nicaea which was neutral (in the middle) between the two great extremes of that time, namely the Eastern Church and the Western Church. The council is a moderate way of church to resolve doctrinal disputes that occur in the church. The

¹⁰ Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, *Religious Moderation* (Jakarta: Ministry of Religion, 2019)

¹¹ Suhadi Cholil, Freedom of Religion amid Polarization and Religious Moderation Policy. *Journal of Interreligious Studies and Intercultural Theology*. November 2022.

government, whether out of concern for the church and the Christian faith, or politically motivated, played a role in the realization of the council.

In this position, the author sees a prospect to see the legacy of the Council of Nicaea operationally and functionally into the practice of religious moderation (also church moderation). According to the author, this inspirational angle is prospective to hack the middle way in the midst of polarization, both the polarization of Indonesian society due to identity politics, and the internal polarization of churches in Indonesia due to various doctrines, church systems, and institutional interests.

RESPONDING TO DOUBLE POLARIZATION: FROM THE ONE GOD TO THE TRINITY, ECHOES OF NICAEA?

The double polarization that the author refers to here is the polarization of Indonesian society due to identity politics, and the internal polarization of churches. However, in discussing this point, the author will only focus on the Common Understanding of the Christian Faith (PBIK) document from the Fellowship of Churches in Indonesia (PGI). As previously explained, PGI Sejah in 1984, has succeeded in formulating the Church Oneness Document as a guide for the realization of the oneness of the church towards the Unity Church in Indonesia.

The Common Understanding of the Christian Faith was agreed upon at the PGI General Assembly in Ambon in 1984. In 2000, at the General Assembly in Palangkaraya, this document underwent a slight revision. The latest formulation in the 2019-2024 DKG in the basic part of thinking reads as follows:

The power of the Holy Spirit who has given birth to DGI ahead of Pentecost on May 25, 1950 in Jakarta, which at the General Assembly of the X DGI/PGI in Ambon in 1984, became PGI, we PGI member churches have agreed and are determined to realize our duties and vocations as God's churches in Indonesia, in the atmosphere and spirit of the communion church. and not individually or separately. We have entered history together and are on the common path as the One Church in Indonesia, which is growing towards perfection as the One Church of God everywhere and throughout the ages.

We pledge the Apostolic Confession of Faith and the Nicene Confession of Constantinople, which were born out of the struggle of faith in the early church, as a true and full testimony based on the Bible to the Christian faith and as a symbol of the oneness of the Church of God everywhere and throughout the ages. We recognize the Confession of Faith that has been born in the context of the history of the church renewal movement (Reformasi) as part of the church's heritage that enriches our faith. We understand that the various Confessions of Faith as a result of the struggles of PGI member churches in the past, present and future, in order to declare their faith, are part of our common testimony based on the Bible.

The Common Understanding of the Christian Faith begins with a formulation of the Lord God. It is interesting to pay attention to the formula as below:

Indeed, "God is our God, God is One" (Deut. 6:4). There is no God but Him (Ex. 20:3; Ul. 5:7). He is the God who created the heavens and the earth and all their contents, and who has preserved them to the end of nature (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 24:1–2; 89:12; 104:1 ff.; Cabbage. 1:16). God reveals himself in His creative work and in the history of mankind (Ps. 19:2–3; Rom. 1:19–20) and specifically and perfectly in Jesus Christ, His Only Begotten Son (Jn. 1:18). By the leadership of the Holy Spirit we know and worship Him as Father in Jesus Christ, for all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God (Rom. 8:14–15).

God speaks to man repeatedly and in various ways through the intercession of prophets and in these latter days through the intercession of Jesus Christ, His Only Begotten Son (Heb. 1:1–2). In Jesus Christ God reveals Himself as the God who forgives and saves man from the condemnation of sin, that is, by emptying Himself, and taking the form of a servant, and becoming like man. And in his human state, He humbled Himself and obeyed to death, even to death on the cross. That is why God exalted Him so much and gave Him a name above all names, that in the name of Jesus would bow down to all things that are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confesses, "Jesus Christ is Lord" to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:7–11).

God is present and works in the world and in the church through the Holy Spirit who liberates man from the law of sin and the law of death (Rom. 8:2; 2 Cor. 3:17). The Holy Spirit animates, renews, builds, unites, strengthens, disciplines, and confirms and empowers the church to be witnesses, to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment, and to lead believers to the whole truth of God (Ezek. 37; Acts. 1:8; Ef. 3:16–17; 4:3–4; Rom. 8:1; 1Cor. 12:7, 12; 14:26, 33; 2Tim. 1:7; Yoh. 16:8–11, 13). Therefore, we confess and glorify and bear witness to the One and Eternal God, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Isa. 43:10; 44:6; Mat. 28:19; 2Cor. 13:13; Phil. 4:20; Heb. 13:8; Why. 4:8).

Important to underline in this formulation is the phrase One God used to formulate the Lord God, not the Trinity or the Trinity. This formulation cannot be separated from the efforts of churches in Indonesia to formulate their faith contextually in the context of a pluralistic Indonesia. In the minutes of the trial and interviews with the formulators of this formula, information was obtained that the formula "One God" was chosen to avoid attacks from Muslims who claimed that Christians have three Gods. This is certainly a pragmatic consideration, but more fundamentally the biblical foundations referred to that do point to the oneness of God.

In 2024, the PGI General Assembly will be held on November 8-13, 2024. One of the things to be discussed is the renewal, or rather the reformulation of the Common Understanding of the Christian Faith. Based on the last draft that was shared, there was a fundamental change in the formulation of the Lord God becoming the God of the Trinity. The full formula is as below;

1. ***The Trinity: One Essence, Three Persons.*** The Church believes in and acknowledges the one God who is eternally in three Persons, namely the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Deut. 6:4; Mat. 3:13-17; Yoh. 15:26; 17:22). The three Persons are essential and have one will to

love each other eternally. Each of these Persons is different from the other but is never separated. The Church believes in the Trinity as the God of Fellowship and the Missionary God, that is, God who as one divine communion directs His love to all creation. With the power of abundant love, God Trinity reveals Himself to all creation through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church lives to glorify and bear witness to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Trinity's statement is accepted by faith by diverse traditions and cultures and therefore creates the possibility to be understood differently according to the pluralistic context.

2. **Allah of the Federation.** The recognition that the Trinity is the God of Fellowship encourages the Church to understand herself as the property and creation of the Trinity. Therefore, the communion of the Church derives from the communion of the Trinity (Jn. 14:26; 16:13-15; 2 Cor. 13:13). The Trinity Fellowship that shows the difference, equality, relationship, and unity of the three divine Persons is also the basis for the Church to fight for the communion of faith characterized by difference, equality, relation, and unity. The Church is invited to live for a world that God loves by valuing differences and unity with fellow man and all creation. Our participation in the fellowship of the Trinity encourages us to live that, through Jesus Christ in the loving power of the Holy Spirit, God chooses to be fragile along with all of creation.
3. **Missionary God.** The recognition that the Trinity is a Missionary God encourages the Church to understand herself as a communion of believers created, saved and sanctified by God who gave Himself through the sending of the Son, through His birth as a true man, in the loving power of the Holy Spirit. God the Father sent the Son in the Holy Spirit with an abundant love directed to all creation (John 3:16; Acts. 10:38). The essence of the Church as a missionary communion is derived in its participation in the mission of God. Therefore, the Church must be involved in all efforts to fight for an abundant life (Jn. 10:10b), which is characterized by equality, justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. All of these works are the mission of the Trinity of God for all creation. The unity and unity of the Church is manifested in its participation in God's mission.

The fundamental change in chapter I from "Lord Allah" to "Allah Trinity" is the hottest topic of discussion in the process of socializing this change in formula which will be carried out throughout 2024 in various regions of Indonesia. On the one hand, this change shows the great significance of the Council of Nicaea in the formulation of a new Common Understanding of the Christian Faith in Indonesia. On the other hand, this change can be understood as part of the efforts of the churches in Indonesia to formulate their confession of faith in a more autonomous context, and not in the shadow of an effort to respond to the erroneous views of adherents of other religions. It should not be understood in the framework of exclusivism, but in the strong spirit of ecumenism.

How not, the Trinity Doctrine has until now become the main point of contention in Christianity in Indonesia. Discussing the Trinity Doctrine is not an easy matter. Joas

Adiprasetya, one of Indonesia's leading theologians, called this a conversation, discussion, or debate that will never end. Perhaps it is in this consciousness that it is necessary and urgent to reformulate the Common Understanding of the Christian Faith in the context of polarization in Indonesia today.

Conclusion

The polarization of Indonesian society is a double polarization. The polarization of society is mainly due to the political situation that uses religious, racial, and ethnic sentiments. But also the internal polarization of Christianity that is increasingly crystallizing and institutionalizing. This makes Christianity in Indonesia in two problems at once. First, its presence in the midst of the pluralism of Indonesian society, but also, second, about pluralism within itself. In the midst of this polarizing context, the echoes of the Council of Nicaea found significance. Both the inspiration is in line with the practice of religious moderation in Indonesia. But also his theological formulation of the irreplaceable Trinity of God and finds its operationalization, significance, and contextualization in the diverse context of Indonesia. From it, Christian faith and unity became a contextual doctrinal face and established in Indonesian Christians.