

TENSION OF MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS IN INDONESIA: THE CASE OF CONVERSION AND CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS

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ABSTRACT

*There are tensions in Christian-Muslim relations in Indonesia since the time of the New Order until today. The issues in Christian-Muslim relations include conversion of faith with marriage and celebrating Christmas. These two issues are constantly associated with religious politics in Indonesia. The issues have forced tensions to resurface, although according to Indonesian history, Christianity and Islam had jointly driven colonialists away and participated in founding the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. In addition to theological affairs, the two issues relating to the tension of Christian-Muslim relationships have also impacted political and economic affairs. This article provides a description of tension between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia in the case of conversion from Islam to Christianity through marriage and celebrating Christmas in Muslim communities. The work concludes that in order to reduce tension between Christians and Muslims, all efforts to conduct *theologia religionum* dialogue should be sought, and social harmony between Christians and Muslims should be created. All of this is none other than a model of religious practices that have surpassed symbols. This is called passing over religious practices with new religious experiences.*

Keywords: Muslim-Christian Relationship; Conversion of Faith; Celebrating Christmas

INTRODUCTION

Christian-Muslim relations in Indonesia have always been a sensitive discourse. This is due to the theological, historical, and political factors in the backdrop (Sumartana, 2015). Several other sensitive issues relate to issues of Christianization and colonialism (Sumartana, 2015). Another problem

is related to freedom of religion, particularly of minority groups, which is constantly discussed in academia (Yewangoe, 2015). Minority groups are nearly in a constant pitfall of freedom due to suspicions of their activities (Yewangoe, 2015). The relationship between Islam and Christianity in Indonesia is full of religious-political tensions.

Aside from issues of theology and Christianization, the building of places of worship is another sensitive issue in Indonesian Christian-Muslim relations (Asfinawati, 2014). In terms of building places of worship, there are many cases where the building of places of worship was thwarted and prohibited from continuing (Ali-Fauzi et al., 2011). Places of worship belonging to a region's minority groups truly pose a grave challenge in Christian-Muslim relations in Indonesia today. Particularly post the 1998 political reform, numerous houses of worship have been damaged by followers of other religions (Muslims damaging Christians' and Christians damaging Muslims' places of worship) (Ali-Fauzi, Alam, dan Panggabean, 2009).

When we trace back historic tensions that ignited disputes between Christians and Muslims, we found they have occurred since the development of the theological perspective that there is no salvation outside the church (*extra eccllesia nula salus*). Such belief is followed by Indonesian churches to this day, and it has impacted the prevalence of suspicions and assumptions that religions other than Christianity are fake (Sumartana, 2011). Meanwhile, there is the assumption among Muslims that there is no salvation outside of Islam (*inna dina indallahi Islam*). God does not acknowledge one's deeds and beliefs outside of Islam. Islam is the perfect religion while other religions are denied, which has been believed by the majority of Muslims until it becomes an absolute doctrine. Accordingly, an inclusive and dialogic perspective of theology needs to be developed to respect differing theological beliefs between Christianity and Islam (Sumartana, 2011).

One of the impacts of the tense Christian-Muslim relations is the advent of conflicts, such as those witnessed in Ambon, where Muslims and Christians alike were engaged in violent conflict (Subagya, 2015). In the case of the Poso conflict, it was due to suspicions and tension between Christians as the majority and Muslims as the minority (Qodir, 2018). The dominance of Christians in Poso had led to unequal social relations with the Muslim community. Meanwhile, the conflict in Papua was caused by a standstill in the dialogue between Christian and Muslim communities in terms of building places of worship and other religious rituals (Hamid dan Suryo, 2014; Hasse, 2016; Qodir, 2015a). Political and economic dominance also served as causal factors in the tensions between Christians and Muslims in Papua (Faisal,

2020).

Facts on the ground corroborate the ongoing tension and contestation between Muslims and Christians to this day, given the various incidents that have taken place. Such conditions have resulted in a harmonious Christian-Muslim relationship that is actually restricted within the confines of artificialities. A harmonious state might have been observed during the New Order, but after the fall of the regime, it has become a serious issue confronted by both Muslim and Christian communities. It is interesting to note that amidst the unfolding conflicts, seeds of peace were found at the local level as part of local community initiatives. For instance, in Ambon where violent conflicts occurred causing more than ten thousand fatalities, there was an initiative to develop peace by civilians of Christian and Muslim backgrounds (Antoni, 2014; Al Qurtuby, 2016). The Christian and Muslim communities in Ambon engaged in collaborative efforts within the framework of humanity to recover from the aftermath of the violent conflicts that ravaged both communities (Pariela, 2008). The Christian and Muslim communities jointly fostered peace, which was shattered by horizontal conflicts in Ambon (Pariela, 2007). Such is also the case in Poso, where peace initiatives were carried out by civil society organizations like Monsituwu Foundation (Prasetyo, 2019). In Papua, initiatives for peace were suggested by both Christian and Muslim groups so that the conflict of violence did not continue (Faisal, 2020; al Hamid, 2020; Hamid dan Suryo, 2014; Yamin, 2020).

The tension in the relationship between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia may be afforded to the contestation fought over public space between the two largest missionary religions in Indonesia (Adeney-Risakotta, 2015). The Christian-Muslim relationship, accordingly, requires social ethics in order to alleviate the ongoing tension based on religious, political, or economic perspectives (Qodir, 2015b). Interreligious social ethics between the two largest religions (Christianity and Islam) in Indonesia is of utmost importance so that issues of mistrust or suspicions may be reduced.

Such conditions above, ultimately, demand that the existing construction of religious relationships (between Christians and Muslims), which is full of tensions, transitions into a relationship of mutual understanding and respect. The majority group should not impose any restrictions upon minority groups. In Indonesia, freedom of religion is a fundamental right guaranteed by the Indonesian Constitution in Article 29 Verse 1 stating that every citizen is free to choose their religion and belief. As such, a strict regulation that does not violate the rights of citizens is required in the life of the state and society (Bagir et. al, 2019). The current article argues that the ongoing Christian-

Muslim tension in Indonesia today is a persisting problem that continues to be submerged and perpetuated, and accordingly requires a contemporary solution to untangle the conflict and pressure between the two groups. A wisdom approach by holding religious (Christian-Muslim) dialogues within the framework of *religionum theology* must be conducted intensively in order to mutually understand and respect differences that are evident in Christianity and Islam. There should be no more mutual suspicions among Christians and Muslims, and followers should not perpetuate proselytization methods calling upon religious conversion and blaming the religious views others adhere to. Passing over serves as one of the options in fostering better Christian-Muslim relations in Indonesia. Immersion into others' feelings and understanding differences are among some of the key steps.

THE ISSUE OF CONVERSION WITH MARRIAGE

Muslim-Christian relations have often been hampered by issues relating to religious conversion, which for instance refers to a Muslim converting to Christianity since the New Order until today. However, it is not an issue for Muslims when a Christian converts to Islam. They are considered by Muslims to have been given divine guidance and chosen the true path. However, it becomes a serious issue when one converts from Islam to Christianity. They will be considered apostates who have renounced the true faith and abandoned divine guidance. Religious conversion, from Islam to Christianity or vice versa, remains unacceptable as a part of "religious freedom". This is, associatively, due to the missionary concept of da'wah and proselytizing found in both religions (Mujiburrahman, 2006).

Religious conversion has even become a tough political issue. The problem of conversion, which has put a strain on Muslim-Christian relations since the New Order, is a suspicion that Muslims have against Christians (Steenbrink, 2005). Several educational institutions and non-government organizations have long been suspected to be agents of Christianizing (converting) Muslims. In terms of study centers, the suspicion falls upon the Centre for Strategy and International Studies (CSIS) led by Sofyan Wanandi and Daoed Joesoef. Sanata Dharma University (previously known as IKIP Sanata Dharma Yogyakarta), which is a higher education institution accused to be an agent of Christianization and *kaderisasi sebulan* (one-month caderization – *kasebul*) (Dhakidae, 2003). Two Protestant higher education institutions often considered agents of Christianization include Satya Wacana Christian University of Salatiga and Duta Wacana Christian University of Yogyakarta (Dhakidae, 2003). In the Christian circle, the Indonesian Bible Society

(Lembaga Al-Kitab Indonesia – LAI) that publishes the Bible in Jakarta is accused to be an agent that distributes Bibles to Muslim communities. Meanwhile, religious seminars held by the Council of Churches in Indonesia (which has changed to Communion of Churches in Indonesia/PGI) are deemed as forums to discuss issues of Christianization, despite the difficulty in proving such accusations (Sumartana, 2011).

A study by Robert W. Hefner, concerning religious conversion in the Hill of Tengger, states the problem unfolding among Muslims, Christians, and Hindus as a historical and anthropological issue (Hefner, 1993). Religious conversion is also a political-economic issue in Indonesia (Hefner, 1987). Hefner also places minority religions as being accused of being agents of religious conversion from Islam to Christianity (Hefner, 1990). Conversion has, subsequently, become a crucial issue ambushing higher education institutions as well as Indonesian political-economic life. The issue of religious conversion becomes even more serious when the individual is a Muslim woman converting to Christianity. The accusation that Christians deliberately have a Christianization agenda by marrying Muslim women with the purpose of spreading Christianity among Muslims, as is the case in Aceh, exists among the public (Ansor & Amri, 2020).

Upon closer observation, issues on the Christianization of Muslims pertain to individuals carrying out religious conversion, the presence of educational institutions, study centers, Bible publications, and members of the community with economic predicaments. When a Muslim converts to Christianity, Christians will be accused as undertaking efforts of Christianization. Yet, oppositely, when Christians convert to Islam, it is not considered as a deliberate effort of converting Christians. The Muslim community may even be proud these converts, particularly when they become a prominent Muslim figure.

The problem of religious conversion in Indonesia indirectly correlates with the country's population and its exceedingly varied religiosity and spirituality traditions. With a population of 265 million in 2010, Robert W Hefner stated: "With a population of 265 million people, Indonesia is the third most populous electoral democracy in the world. It is also one of the most ethnically diverse, with over four hundred ethnic groups living on 4000 islands stretching across some 3400 miles along the equator. Indonesia is also the world's most populous Muslim-majority country, with 87.2% of citizens officially professing Islam. The remaining population is divided among Protestants and Catholics (9.90%), Hindus (1.69%), Buddhists (0.72%), and Confucians (0.05%). Although the Indonesian state extends formal recognition to just these six religions, there are several hundred thousand Indonesians who adhere to one among dozens of "indigenous religions" (*agama leluhur*) or "spirituality traditions" (*aliran*

kepercayaan) in the country. As will be discussed below, in recent years the status of these long-unrecognized religious traditions has become the focus of public debate and judicial review” (Hefner, 2020).

Many studies state that religious conversion carried out in Indonesia is not problematic. However, the facts on the ground are contrary to these findings because religious conversions from Islam to Christianity are a very serious problem in the Muslim community. This is especially problematic and controversial if the conversion is carried out by those who become religious leaders or famous personalities who were formerly Muslims but are now Christians. These type of incidents in Islamic society, where a Muslim marries a Christian and changes their religions, they will be considered to have betrayed his religion, family and society. Therefore, the social punishment for a Muslim who marries a Christian is very severe, especially if one later changes religion.

Therefore, religious leaders, both Christian and Muslim, have suggested that marriages should be within one's religion. Clearly, these leaders do not recommend interfaith marriages. The social burden of interfaith marriage can last a very long time because it becomes a burden to those who have to live through such mixed-religious unions as well as the burden for their families. Abdul Muhamimin said, one of the caretakers of a boarding school in Kotagede, Yogyakarta, is quoted as saying: “Marriage between religions, Islam and Christianity, even if there are those who allow it. Actually, the social burden they bear is very heavy. There are those whose families are no longer willing to admit they are part of the family. Someone threw him out of his house. Others were insulted by the local community on the accusation that they only wanted to get property. In fact, there are those who punish them as infidels-apostates. Therefore, even if interfaith marriage is allowed, in my opinion, the burden will be lighter if marriage is within one's religion, Muslims with fellow Muslims and Christian with Christian. It does not have to be between religions”.

This is problematic in particular if the interfaith marriage is carried out by a figure or popular person in the Muslim community. This person will become a topic of conversation because of the marriage that is carried out. For example, in the case of a marriage between a television actress, a singer, or a female cinema star who marries a Christian cinema actor, then the punishment for the artist may not be light. The artist can become an issue on social media and may even be expelled from his village for marrying a Christian. This is especially true as an actor who is Christian among Muslims is usually referred to as an infidel, a largely derogative and disapproving term. This concern is especially if an interfaith marriage is performed by an Islamic religious figure

with a Christian. For such cases, the social punishment against such persons can last a lifetime with the individual accused of “selling religion” at a cheap price.

Critics have also argued that interfaith marriages are about creating wealth and beautifying oneself, and where beauty becomes a goal of life even if it means challenging God. It is for this dual mission of wealth creation and beautification that some Muslims are seen to be willing to marry a Christian. In view of these debates and narratives, interfaith marriages in Islamic societies are not as easy as in the past due to the rise of theological debates even in the context of rising discussions of religious pluralism. The same debates and challenges also exist in the Christian community. There are rising debates and issues about a Christian marrying a Muslim with such individuals accused of leaving the “path of Christus”. Such individuals are said to have lost the blessings of Jesus. Those who marry outside the Christian religion are said to have violated the sacred promise of being with the kingdom of God. Hence, even within the Christian community, it prefers a Christian to marry another Christian. Or, if a Christian marries a Muslim, the Christian should stay within Christianity and not convert to Islam. This is because by converting to a Muslim, a Christian is seen to be “violating the Way of Truth”. Hence, for Christians, if there is an interfaith marriage it is said to have an impact on religious transformation and hence, remains a serious problem and is viewed from negative lenses.

Bishop Gregorius Subanar said the following about the topic:

As a pastor, I always suggest that if you are going to get married, it is better if you only have one religion. Because marriage between religions is a serious social risk. Especially if you change religions because of marriage. It is a very severe “social punishment” to his siblings and family. There are many cases of marriage between religions which then have an impact on the rift between families in society even though some are still in harmony. However, in society they actually ‘criticize and punish’ those who marry between religions and convert to other religions”.

Bishop Subanar’s statement seems no different from what Abdul Muhaimin has stated. That marriage between religions, which causes religious conversion, even if it is permissible, actually creates serious problems in Muslim and Christian societies. Both Muslim and Christian communities are still not completely accepting if they take the path of marriage between religions, let alone change religions. Marriage between religions and changing religions is indeed a person’s right in choosing the path of life. However, the social

punishment that must be borne becomes a burden that often discourages people from doing so. In Christianity, there are also negative consequences if a religious figure converts to Islam. The punishment given is much more serious. The phrase “Selling God”, “Denying the Grace of the Lord Jesus”, and “Betrayal of the kingdom of God”, “Preparing to receive sin from God” and “not getting the atonement” are common expressions in Christian society, particularly in Indonesian Charismatic Christian community.

It is true that there are many motives for people to convert or marry between religions, including the generosity of one's family and to receive “guidance” or God's guidance. However, such motives are often incomprehensible to the general public, regardless of whether one is a Muslim or Christian. In fact, among Muslims, if a Muslim converts to Christianity, then there is only a very negative expression: apostasy and being distant from the Guidance of God. It also connotes that one is following the lust of the devil and the worldly attractions and hence the willingness to leave the goodness of the hereafter. In short, inter-religious marriages that cause the transfer of religion will be a disaster in social life in Indonesia. This leads to the view that one's choice of inter-marriage and religious conversion would create conflicts in society, especially in Indonesia, including a rising trust deficit between Muslims and Christians.

PRAYER EVENTS OF CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS

Eid al-Fitr and Christmas are two of the most popular holidays for Muslims and Christians. Wishing Christians “Merry Christmas” was, initially, not a serious issue before 1981. However, since 1981 Muslims saying Merry Christmas became a very sensitive matter. It is known that Christmas became a sensitive issue since the resignation of Buya Hamka as the General Chair of MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council) in 1981 due to a difference of opinion with the government relating to Christmas celebrations conducted by governmental institutions that held joint Christmas Ceremony in Indonesia. Buya Hamka was of the opinion that participating in the Christmas Ceremony is haram for Muslims. Meanwhile, the government expected Buya Hamka to revoke the fatwa. Yet, Buya Hamka chose not to revoke the fatwa and resigned from the position of MUI General Chair.

The content of the MUI fatwa issued in 1981 is as follows: (1) Christmas celebration in Indonesia, although their purpose is to celebrate and honor Prophet Isa (peace be upon him), Christmas is inseparable from matters of faith and worship; (2) It is haram for Muslims to participate in joint-Christmas ceremonies; (3) Muslims are advised not to participate in Christmas activities

so as not to be plunged into *shubhat* (doubt) and Allah's prohibition. Such a fatwa on Christmas was issued by MUI in 1981. It was signed on March 7th, 1981 by the chair of the Fatwa Commission at the time, KH M Syukri Ghazali, and the Secretary of the Fatwa Commission, Mas'udi. When the fatwa was issued, MUI was chaired by Prof. Dr. KH. Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, also known as Buya Hamka.

The current General Chair of MUI, Din Syamsuddin, said that when correlated with the present social religious conditions, the 1981 MUI fatwa needs to be revisited. Din Syamsuddin mentioned that due to the misunderstanding of Christmas among Muslims, joint Christmas events are haram to Muslims. Din Syamsuddin stated, "Some issues had come to the attention of ulema before the fatwa was issued. For instance, joint Christmas celebrations were often misinterpreted by some Muslims. Christmas celebration was also frequently likened to celebrating Mawlid al-Nabi (the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him) because Christmas marks the birth of Prophet Isa (Jesus Christ) to Christians. Accordingly, the fatwa was issued with the consideration that Muslims needed clear guidance concerning joint Christmas celebration so as not to intermix their worship with acts of worship of other religions, without undermining efforts to maintain interreligious harmony throughout Indonesia" (Pratama, 2014).

Based on the exegeses of theologians and ulema of fiqh (Islamic law), the MUI fatwa that has been applied since 1981 until today, has constantly become one of the sources of tension in the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia, when Muslims convey Christmas greetings or salutations. Accordingly, when Christians express Eid al-Fitr greetings or salutations, tension unfolds among Muslims in which some argue that Christians should not express Eid al-Fitr salutation to Muslims, as it will erode Muslim faith. As, generally, Muslims carry out Ramadan Fasting for a full month prior to celebrating Eid al-Fitr. Throughout the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims conduct various religious activities as additional rituals, such as reciting the Quran (*tadarus al-quran*), providing snacks or meals to break the fast (*ta'jil*), communal reading of the Quran before breaking the fast, after the night prayer (Isha) and *tarawih* prayer. Muslims undertake all of those activities for the purpose of becoming closer to and gaining more reward from God during the holy month of Ramadan. All are carried out so that at the end of Ramadan, Muslims who fast expect to acquire a venerable standing as a human being that only fears God (piety) because they have fasted and followed all of its ensuing rituals (Shihab, 2008).

There is intense discourse pertaining to such expression in the Muslim

community on account of some Muslims who consider that expressing Christmas greetings to Christians is an expression of national comradeship as fellow citizens. It will not erode a Muslim's faith whatsoever. Expressing Christmas greetings will not turn a Muslim into a Christian. In fact, saying Christmas salutations to Christians indicates Muslim's degree of faith in Allah for the existing diversity in Indonesia, and that, essentially, is an acknowledgment to *sunnatullah* (the immutable laws of Allah) (Maarif, 2015). A serious debate that generates tension is also related to the guarding of churches carried out by Muslims during Christmas celebrations. Some Muslims question why the Multipurpose Ansor Front (*Barisan Serbaguna Ansor* – Banser, a part of NU's youth wing) guards churches during Christmas, while it does not guard mosques or locations for prayers during Eid al-Fitr. What is Banser's intent in guarding churches during Christmas if not for the sake of momentary interest and to state that they are, seemingly, tolerant of others? Meanwhile, those who do not do such things are not tolerant. That is why, guarding mosques during Eid al-Fitr is, actually, considered mere Christian politics so that their faith is acknowledged by the Muslim community, despite it being in clear opposition to the Islamic belief (Nashrullah, 2019).

In terms of guarding churches, and expressing Christmas salutations, Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tarjih Council firmly states its opinion as stipulated in the book titled *Tanya Jawab Agama Jilid II, Tim Majlis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah* [Q & A on Religion Volume II, Tarjih Council Team of Muhammadiyah Central Board], which was published by Suara Muhammadiyah (1991). It is explained that attending joint Christmas celebrations is haram in the perspective of Islamic law. Muhammadiyah, in this matter, upholds the word of Allah SWT in the Quran as follows: "They are those who do not bear false witness, and when they come across falsehood, they pass it by with dignity" (Al Azhar, 2012). The meaning of this verse is that they do not attend 'az-zur'. If they were to pass by it, they would do so immediately and would not want to be tarnished at all by 'az-zur' (Katsir, 2018). Many Islamic legal rulings declare that it is haram to attend celebrations of non-Muslim holidays based on this verse. To support its view, Muhammadiyah Central Board's Tarjih Council also refers to Imam Malik who stated, "Muslims are forbidden from celebrating holidays of *mushrik* (polytheist) or *kafir* (infidel), giving something (presents), selling something to them, or ride vehicles they use to celebrate their holidays. Meanwhile, eating food that they offer us is *makruh* (disliked), be it delivered to us or them inviting us" (Tamiyyah, 1967). Saying 'Merry Christmas' is akin to glorifying it, which is not allowed (Al-Jauziyyah, 1956). Unlike Muhammadiyah's view, the Executive Council of the NU Sentral Board is of the opinion that there is nothing wrong with Muslims

wishing Christians 'Merry Christmas'. Let alone when it is expressed simply to respect and maintain comradeship as fellow citizens. The chair of NU Sentral Board's Executive council, Robikin Emhas, stated that some religious priests do indeed have differing perspectives concerning the legal ruling for Muslims to express 'Merry Christmas' to Christians (Santoso & Yasir, 2019).

Such conditions have an impact on creating tensions when Muslims celebrate Eid al-Fitr. The Eid al-Fitr celebration among Muslims is one of the rituals that have a very deep meaning to celebrate Muslims who carried out acts of worship throughout the month of Ramadan. Muslims who have completed their fast are expected to be reborn as a hallowed human being, back to their initial point of faith. Whereas Christians, through Christmas, are also reborn in holiness as their sins have been cleansed away by Jesus Christ through his sacrifice on the cross. The two different and meaningful traditions of Eid al-Fitr and Christmas are laden with theological meanings and tensions between Muslims and Christians throughout the political period from 1985 until today. Even since the 1998 political reform, Eid al-Fitr and Christmas have been witnessed as events with highly intense political tensions. In terms of the development of this issue among Indonesians, according to the 1981 MUI fatwa, expressing Christmas salutation is haram. However, MUI does not, actually, prohibit expressing Christmas salutation in the fatwa.

Considering the debate presented by Muhammadiyah and NU about the celebration and Christmas greetings of a Muslim to Christians, can be said to be a question that has been going on all this time. It is very sensitive for a Muslim to deliver a Christmas greeting to a Christian. There are very unpleasant accusations like Apostasy, selling religion, and not a strong faith. Such allegations are hardly heard in the literature we can read. However, we will get it while in the Muslim community. This is of course a problem in the relationship between religions (Islam-Christianity) in Indonesia because the celebration of Christmas and Eid al-Fitr will always happen every year. The sensitivity of Muslims towards Christians who wish them a happy Eid was considered a tactic so that one day Muslims owe a debt of gratitude to wish Christians a Merry Christmas. We will easily get WhatsApp posts, videos, and Facebook, just before Christmas arrives. At that time, Muslims were warned not to say Christmas, because it made Muslims be considered apostate or infidel, and changed religions. The social impact on Islam-Christian relations in Indonesia is truly dire. The tension during Christmas and Eid al-Fitr occurs because the congregation congratulates Eid or congratulations about Christmas on social media.

CONCLUSION

The critical issue hampering Christian-Muslim relations is the matter of religious mission (da'wah) found in the two Abrahamic traditions. Both claim to be the bringer and spreader of religion to people of the world so they can be saved from their digression. This is the crux of the problem in Christian-Muslim relations that continues to develop to this day and resulting in other problems such as religious conversion building of houses of worship, Christmas-Eid al-Fitr celebrations, and the issue of Jesus-Muhammad. These issues develop due to theological perspectives within Christianity and Islam that have not been resolved to date. Without the willingness of Christians and Muslims to jointly engage in critical dialogues pertaining to Christian-Muslim relations, which have been full of tensions since the post-colonial period until today, suspicions to bring down one another, to disrespect the uniqueness, differences, and salvation found in both missionary religions will remain among Christians and Muslims alike. The two Abrahamic religious traditions continue to be at odds due to differences in theological matters, as well as political and economic issues in the country.

One of the means to stop or reduce the ongoing tensions between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia today and in the future contemporary era is by conducting equal, critical, and open dialogue. By implementing such means, both Christians and Muslims will be able to learn from one another, share experiences, and still steadfastly uphold the beliefs they follow. This is the tradition of passing over that can be developed among followers of Christianity and Islam in Indonesia. Passing over can, accordingly, be considered a new tradition in spreading the mission of the Abrahamic religious traditions within the present context. Passing over also functions as a religious design within a perspective that goes beyond religious symbolism. It refers to practicing religion in a diversity of symbols yet a unity of substantial meaning.

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