

# THE VEIL OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN NEOLIBERALISM AGENDA IN INDONESIA

Arsya AMARLAILY ARBIYANTI  
*Universitas Darussalam (UNIDA) Gontor*  
*arsya.arbyanti@gmail.com*

In this 21st century, the understanding of religion has undergone significant changes. The emergence of pluralism concepts is a concrete manifestation of this change. Among them are the World Theology concept presented by Wilfred Cantwell Smith and the Global Theology introduced by John Hick. These two concepts have in common in assuming that all the divine religions have the same God, be it Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. This understanding raises controversy in society. Neoliberalism shapes religion from above. It changes the environment in which religious institutions evolve and imposes new ways of managing human and economic resources. Traditional religious institutions, which were bureaucratized, hierarchical, and vertical, are forced to downsize, 'rationalize' their activities, develop communication strategies and branded identities, outsource administrative tasks, and cast their mission as the provision of services meeting individual needs. Meanwhile, new networked, supple, charismatic, horizontal and transnational religious organizations emerge which increase pluralism and challenge institutionalized privileges. This paper aims to reveal the reasons why this phenomenon persists to this day with problem boundaries in the context of Indonesia. This research is a literature study with a critical analysis method through Content Analysis. The results of this study indicate that the development of religious pluralism can persist because it is supported by the ideology of neoliberalism. Furthermore, this research can be a reference for public education efforts related to the issue of religious pluralism.

**KEYWORDS:** Religious pluralism, Neoliberalism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Indonesia

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a unitary state that supports its people to embrace and practice religion according to their respective wishes. However, in the last decade, a concept emerged that can threaten people's freedom in carrying out their religious life. The understanding in question

is the understanding of religious pluralism. This concept equates all religions, saying they come from the same God.<sup>1</sup> In fact, with this concept, religion loses its absolute value.

Religious pluralism has developed in various countries of the world; namely, the United States, India, countries in the Southeast Asian region, including Indonesia. The existence of religious pluralism in Indonesia is not only at the level of thought but has already infected daily religious practices; for example, greetings when attending events. Greetings that should be given by Muslims should only be “*As-sālamu ‘alaykum*”. However, there are Muslim religious leaders who also use singing as greetings.<sup>2</sup> This certainly does not reflect Islam as it should. The practice of religious pluralism in Indonesia is also manifested by the presence of people praying in the church.<sup>3</sup> The growing religious pluralism in Indonesia is certainly caused by important factors.

In relation to the description above, this paper aims to critically examine and describe religious pluralism and its relationship with neoliberalism. Moreover, other factors that work hand in hand with neoliberalism in supporting the growth and development of religious pluralism are trying to be adequately disclosed.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN INDONESIA

Etymologically, religious pluralism comes from two words, namely “pluralism” and “religion”. In Arabic, it is translated as *al-ta‘addudīyyah al-dīīyyah*.<sup>4</sup> In a separate sense, pluralism means the principle that different groups can live together in peace in one society.<sup>5</sup> When the word “pluralism” is juxtaposed with “religion,” the meaning then becomes as defined by John Hick:

“..pluralism is the view that the great world faiths embody different perceptions and conceptions of, and correspondingly different responses to, the Real or the Ultimate from within the major variant cultural ways of being human: and that within each of them the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to Reality centredness is manifestly taking place – and taking place, so far as human observation can tell, to much the same extent.”<sup>6</sup>

Hick’s account of religious pluralism describes all religions as “manifestations of the one reality.” Thus, all religions are equals, and none is better than the other.

Another figure who has views on religious pluralism is Anis Malik Thoha. According to Anis Malik Thoha, religious pluralism is a condition of living together (coexistence) between different religions (in a broad sense) in one community while maintaining the specific characteristics or teachings of each religion.<sup>7</sup> The essence of religious pluralism is the relativity of truth to every religion in the world, as a form of tolerance to maintain interreligious harmony in the midst of existing diversity.<sup>8</sup> Existing religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, as well as Islam reject the notion of religious pluralism. This rejection movement shows that this understanding is problematic, contains polemics and is very problematic if it is applied in existing religions.<sup>9</sup>

Pluralism is considered a negative understanding that is capable of damaging existing concepts, “...that is to say, pluralism must take its stand on a grand negative: there is not

the certainty in any particular religion to enable its worldview to be the basis of a viable interpretation of religion.”<sup>10</sup> Those who adopt this standpoint (religious pluralism) emphasize in particular that it is essentially a relative one: there is relativity in all things, not only in science but also in history and cultural values, including religion. This all-pervasive relativism lies at the heart of the real problem of religious pluralism as posed today, and it is a very perplexing and serious one.<sup>11</sup>

Religious pluralism is considered a negative understanding as it rejects “absolutism” which is a peculiarity of religious traditions. Instead of necessitating a truth claim, religious pluralism actually relativizes religious traditions.<sup>12</sup> There are several things that cause religious pluralism to develop. For example, the contradictions surrounding theological issues, socio-political factors, as well as scientific factors, namely the movement for modern scientific study of religions.

First, the contradictions surrounding theological issues include disputes regarding God’s form, the number deities, God’s reincarnation, and other theological questions. Religious people in general understand that there is a supernatural substance with transcendental powers that are metaphysical, and its power surpasses human strength, and this is often known as “God”.<sup>13</sup> However, several religions that are currently widely embraced in the world have their own concept of understanding God.

The religion of Judaism only recognizes the god “Yahweh”, which according to the Jewish faith is a special God for their class exclusively. This kind of monotheism is racist. Then, Christianity also believes in only one God, but has three elements, namely God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This kind of teaching is called trinitarian monotheism.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, Islam does not recognize the racist Jewish belief in monotheism or the Christian trinitarian monotheism. The concept of monotheism (*tawhīd*) in Islam is pure, acknowledging only Allah with the phrase “There is no god but Allah” (*lā ilāha illa Allāh*). The difference in the concept of *tawhīd* is considered to threaten the unity of religious communities such that a common ground or similarity between existing religions is needed to unite and not cause division among religious people.<sup>15</sup> Inter-religious similarities are considered capable of being resolved with the emergence of the notion of religious pluralism.

In addition to theological factors, the second factor that plays a role in the growth and development of religious pluralism is the socio-political situation. The global socio-political situation that we are currently experiencing clearly explains to us how dominant the political and economic interests of the West are towards the world in general.<sup>16</sup> From this it is clearly revealed the nature of the true purpose behind the West’s insistence on monopolizing their single interpretation of democracy and forcing it on all countries in the world.

So, in this way, the religious pluralism that has been born is only one of the instruments or mechanisms of global political forces to prevent the emergence of other forces that might compete with them. It is quite clear that democracy, instead of wanting to project itself as a neutral arbiter between religious groups that are currently at war and fighting over claims of absoluteness, has itself changed its role to become one of these groups.

The third factor that fosters religious pluralism is scientific studies. Modern scientific studies have succeeded in providing libraries with a large amount of literature relating to world religions which is very useful for subsequent studies.<sup>17</sup> Among the important findings and conclusions that have been reached in the discipline of comparative religion with its

various trends (historically, phenomenologically, sociologically, psychologically, and philosophically), is that world religions are only various expressions or manifestations of an absolute and the same metaphysical nature. In other words, all religions are the same.

Religious pluralism has developed in various countries of the world; namely, the United States, India, and countries in the Southeast Asian region, including Indonesia. The existence of religious pluralism in Indonesia is not only at the level of thought but has already infected religious practices in Indonesia. One example is the use of compound greetings when attending events. Greetings that should be given by Muslims should only be “*Assalamualaikum*”. However, there are Islamic religious leaders who also use singing as greetings.<sup>18</sup> This certainly does not reflect Islam as it should. The practice of religious pluralism in Indonesia is also manifested by the presence of people praying in the church.<sup>19</sup>

The emergence of religious pluralism in Indonesia was influenced by the thoughts of John Hick. John Hick, as a well-known figure in pluralism, provided an academic foundation for the existence of religious pluralism in Indonesia. Arafat Noor Abdillah and Said Masykur, for example, agree in their research that Hick is an authoritative figure in building religious pluralism arguments. Apart from that, the education curriculum is also sufficient to provide substance in the development of religious pluralism in Indonesia.<sup>20</sup> Pluralism has also become one of the main programs of the Islamic liberalization movement in Indonesia.<sup>21</sup>

Advocates of religious pluralism in Indonesia usually associate the necessity of embracing this religious understanding with the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), as the largest council in Christian history. Since the Second Vatican Council, it has been clear that the church’s outlook has become very open towards the existence of truth and salvation in non-Christian religions. Karl Rahner, the great theologian who interpreted the Second Vatican Council, formulated his inclusive theology roughly by saying, “Other religions are implicit forms of our own religion”. If the limit is the Second Vatican Council, then it was only from 1963-1965 that there were officially global efforts to initiate the development of theology in an inclusive direction. Pluralist theology rejects the notion of exclusivism, because in exclusivism there is an oppressive tendency.<sup>22</sup>

Pluralism adherents in Indonesia then develop it in simpler, more attractive, and provocative languages. It is as if, religious pluralism is a necessity, which must be embraced by every adherent of religion, replacing the old understanding (exclusivism). Anyone who does not adhere to this ideology can be branded as anti-pluralism and anti-tolerance. Furthermore, it is propagated that all religions are the way to salvation. No single religion has the right to claim to be the only true and the only way of salvation. That said, according to them, the claim of truth in one religion is a source of conflict between religious communities. If we look closely, religious pluralism is also based on the assumption that religion is a source of conflict, or at least provides legitimacy for various social conflicts, so that its adherents’ belief in the absolute truth of their religion needs to be reduced or discarded. As Ferguson notes, “Every major religious tradition includes its justifications for violence.”<sup>23</sup>

The Vatican's attitude toward the Jews underwent an interesting development. For hundreds of years, Christianity was very repressive towards the Jews, because its adherents saw the Jews as responsible for the killing of Jesus. Following the establishment of the state of Israel, May 14, 1948, the Vatican Daily, *L'osservatore Romano*, wrote “Zionism is not the embodiment of Israel as described in the Bible. Zionism is a contemporary phenomenon that

seeks to establish a modern state (Israel), which is philosophically and politically secular. Holy lands and holy places as they really are, form part and parcel of Christendom.”<sup>24</sup>

The notion of religious pluralism in Indonesia is not only troubling Muslims being the followers of Indonesia’s majority religion but members of other religions as well. Among them are the Catholics. Indonesian Catholic cleric, Frans Magnis Suseno, considers that the offer of tolerance in religious pluralism is an insulting attitude even though it is well-intentioned.

## NEOLIBERALISM THROUGH THE LENSE OF RELIGION

Neoliberalism is a derivation of modern liberalism, in which liberalism names the merging of certain liberties of privileged white male owners with the liberties of the financial markets.<sup>25</sup> According to David Harvey, neoliberalism was originally a practical theory of political economy which proposed that human well-being could best be enhanced by unrelenting individual freedoms and entrepreneurial skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.<sup>26</sup> Apart from the link between neoliberalism and the economy, neoliberalism can be seen from another perspective; namely, neoliberalism from an economic standpoint, neoliberalism as a cultural change, and neoliberalism as a lens for studying religious phenomena.

Neoliberal economics is usually traced to the thought of the Austrian-British economist Friedrich von Hayek. In 1947, Hayek founded the Mount Pelerin Society, attracting like-minded intellectuals committed to what they saw as a free society, drawing on the principles and practices of free market economics. A cluster of ideas and debates, rather than a coherent school of thought, neoliberalism continued to develop momentum as a major alternative to the dominant branch of Keynesian economics at the time.<sup>27</sup> Hayek’s neoliberalism has a very different vision for economic and social order. Rather than seeing markets and nation states as best organized in collaborative relationships, Hayek is an advocate of markets remaining free from state intervention.

From a cultural point of view, the cultural expressions of neoliberalism include elements that, from one point, represent the universality of human life. Anthropologists have long noted how the exchange and consumption of goods is not just a matter of survival but of key social actions, structuring social relations and defining hierarchies of status and responsibility.<sup>28</sup> Goods, as Gauthier, Woodhead and Martikainen argue, are a visible part of culture, and it is through their exchange that social life is created.<sup>29</sup> This is the case whether one is in rural India or urban Indianapolis. What happens in a culture shaped by neoliberal assumptions is something quite different. In particular, there has been an increasing importance of consumer goods as symbolic markers that individuals can draw on to serve self-expression, along with valuing the logic of the market as a way of thinking that allows this.<sup>30</sup>

Apart from being related to the economy and culture, neoliberalism is also closely related to religion. Much research concerned with the relationship between economics and religion is ultimately indebted to Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (originally published in 1904), which has produced an extensive literature to this day, reflecting the richness of Weber’s analysis. Weber was not convinced by the argument

that the main drivers of social and religious change could be associated with inequality of wealth and economic status. Weber, on the other hand, was more interested in the influence of economic ideas as far as their influence on the cultural sphere. Weber argued that the modern age would develop further into disillusionment, involving the removal of religion and morality from the realm of economics.<sup>31</sup> What we find in the twenty-first century, as we will see through the following sections, is not separation, but complex convergence. As Hean Comeroff puts it, religion has become “reciprocally involved with economic power”.<sup>32</sup>

This extension of the affinity argument relates to forms of religion that legitimize or affirm identifiable capitalistic values. The most striking examples can be found in charismatic forms of Christianity belonging to the prosperity or faith movements. According to proponents of the prosperity gospel, material wealth is a sign of divine favor, and the steady acquisition of wealth is a divinely endorsed ambition.<sup>33</sup> More than that, the prosperity gospel turns Christian identity into a source of strength. As Birgit Meyer said, writing about the movement in Ghana, for Pentecostal believers prosperity, faith restricted as spiritual eyes and spiritual hands, is a tool, not an inner attitude, that promises born-again believers confidence in God’s blessings.<sup>34</sup> The kind of Pentecostalism that Meyer writes about exemplifies the embrace of the distinctive strands of neoliberal capitalism. His preoccupation, unlike Weber’s Calvinist analysis, is not earnest productivity but material consumption, rich ministers in expensive clothes and Mercedes cars, symbols of how true faith in God can lead to real-world transformation. Importantly, this shift toward material gain comes with a belief in the power that will change the world.

The neoliberal era found alternative spirituality increasingly commercialized, as products and services were marketed and sold to interested customers.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, the development of such a phenomenon has only been possible because of market forces and the opportunities for promotion and engagement made possible through digital media.<sup>36</sup> As the economic system tries to recruit as many customers as possible in the market mechanism, according to Matthew Guest’s analysis, currently, religions are also competing in recruiting prospective pilgrims through commercialization. In short, religion has been commercialized using neoliberalism.

Meanwhile, the economic theory of religion which incorporates elements of market thinking can be found in Max Weber’s book.<sup>37</sup> The explicit use of the market as a metaphor for understanding religion sociologically came much later. In *The Sacred Canopy*, Peter Berger describes pluralistic situations, where the religious monopoly has collapsed because it is dominated by the logic of the market economy. According to Berger, when religious traditions multiply and depend on voluntary loyalty, they become marketing agents and religious traditions become consumer commodities.<sup>38</sup> Use of this analogy among social scientists grew with the expansion of the neoliberal market itself.<sup>39</sup> The studies that emerged in the 1980s that inspired R. Stephen Warner’s formulation of a new paradigm in sociology of religion are framed by economic metaphors; or example, competition in the market for religion – not by religion understood in terms of society – as a broad sacred canopy.<sup>40</sup>

Within this influential group of studies, market competition, rather than an accelerator of secularization, is presented as a stimulator of religious vitality.<sup>41</sup> Just as free competition stimulates a market economy, so free religious markets stimulate the religious landscape. Finke and Stark’s *The Churching of America*, for example, argues that the growing deregulation

lation of religion in the United States created conditions for a free market, in which various religious groups competed for followers. The maintenance of this arrangement has resulted in relatively high overall levels of religious involvement, at least in comparison to economically affluent 'Western' countries.

The causal link here relates to the capacity of free markets to accommodate the needs and preferences of diverse populations (as opposed to societies where one religious tradition remains dominant), as well as the innate incentives for religious movements to become entrepreneurs; their efforts to recruit and retain participants, rather than losing them to competition. The existence of free markets for established religions, Finke and Stark argue, explains why Western European societies are characterized by religious decline while the United States is experiencing religious vitality at the same time.<sup>42</sup>

The assumptions of rational choice theory, as Kathryn Lofton says, embody and upload the logic of neoliberalism.<sup>43</sup> In a remarkable reflection of Friedrich von Hayek's own thinking, it is the market that makes optimal outcomes possible. The notion of 'market' can seem simple and logical, rational, and internally consistent. It is a form of knowledge that can be communicated across cultural contexts and carries the appeal of appearing universally accessible. But because it assumes human decision-making is governed by rules that supersede cultural differences, rational choice theory ignores the cultural constructs of rationality and the ways in which differential access to power shapes the different opportunities available to different people.<sup>44</sup>

Rational choice theory also tends to assume the stability of religious preferences over time, as if the motives people have for aligning themselves with one religious group over another do not change.<sup>45</sup> Some interesting case studies emerge from Eastern Europe; one example is where the absence of religious regulations is accompanied by high levels of disinterest and disaffiliation. For example, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Estonian government introduced a more neoliberal approach to religion, characterized by freedom of practice, limited state intervention, and free religious markets. But the deregulation and diversification of the religious landscape, as rational choice theorists might have hoped, was accompanied by an increase in the vitality and growth of religion, something Ringvee attributed to the historically tenuous link between religion and Estonian national identity.<sup>46</sup>

One observation is undeniable: there are indeed examples of religious behavior that mirror those associated with economic markets. Indeed, in some contexts the mirroring is overt, and religious practice takes forms very similar to the consumption of commercially marketed goods.<sup>47</sup> Here, a religious economy has been developed by Islamic state saints, preachers, and practitioners of esoteric sciences or magic, offering their services for a fee to those seeking health, wealth or success. This 'religious economy' has, over time, resembled the broader neoliberal economy, and these religious entrepreneurs have adapted their practices accordingly. Economic uncertainty is confronted with flexibility and adaptability, the production of religious commodities, and the use of online media to market individual personalities.<sup>48</sup>

Studies by Soares and by Oselia and Osella both illustrate how neoliberal economic influence in developing societies extends to modes of engagement among religious practitioners.<sup>49</sup> Online engagement relates to the area of religious opportunity. First, online engagement has been tamed and normalized over the last two decades. This may especially

be gen Z born after 1995, who are new to a world where digital is an integral part of everyday interactions.<sup>50</sup> The second point is that in the twenty-first century, the online environment is often heavily neoliberally structured.<sup>51</sup>

Protestant Evangelicalism undoubtedly provides the most visible and long-developed example, but the embrace of marketing initiatives among religious movements extends far beyond the Christian world.<sup>52</sup> The recent religious revival in the region, according to Francois Gauthier, is not best understood as a conservative revival of traditional Islam or a resurgent political Islam, but as a development drawing inspiration from Western consumer capitalism. What emerged was a religious movement preoccupied with the values of “self-realization, health, and economic and relational success”.<sup>53</sup> There is a growing perception that Judaism needs to develop a “competitive strategy and cultural adaptation” in order to maintain its appeal among the younger generation and win back the support of those who have drifted away.<sup>54</sup> Various innovations can be identified, including the blending of Eastern spirituality into Judaism and the rebranding of Judaism using the medium of popular entertainment. All reflect efforts to regain a sense of relevance and appeal among a new generation.<sup>55</sup>

## THE CORRELATION BETWEEN NEOLIBERALISM AND RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN INDONESIA

The correlation between religious pluralism and neoliberalism is divided into two; namely, the connection in the spread of the notion of religious pluralism and related to the practice of the religion itself. Regarding the spread of religious pluralism, neoliberalism can be said to have played a big role. The source of the idea of religious pluralism is the idea of John Hick, a Western philosopher who considers that all divine religions come from the same God.<sup>56</sup> The West, aside from being the party that sparked the idea of religious pluralism for the first time, is also the party that supports the development of this understanding in other regions of the world.

Real evidence of the West’s contribution in spreading religious pluralism is the existence of a Muslim moderation mission as stated in the book *Building Moderate Muslim Networks*. In this book it is written that “Moderates are hospitable to Muslim feminists and open to religious pluralism and interfaith dialogue.”<sup>57</sup> This confirms that the West has a mission to help spread the notion of religious pluralism in other countries, including Muslim-majority countries. Apart from the book, evidence supporting the role of neoliberalism in the spread of religious pluralism is the existence of The Religious Pluralism Funders Circle (RPFC)<sup>58</sup> community. This community collects donations from neoliberals and then allocates them for the agenda of spreading religious pluralism.<sup>59</sup> The existence of a real Western agenda and the formation of a special RPFC community is clear evidence that neoliberalism has contributed to the spread of religious pluralism.

In addition to affecting the spread of religious pluralism, neoliberalism also affects the implementation of religious practices themselves. While an economic theory of religion that incorporates elements of market thinking can be found in the work of Max Weber, the explicit use of the market as a metaphor for understanding religion sociologically appears much later. In *The Sacred Canopy*, Peter Berger describes pluralism, in which the religious



monopoly has collapsed, as it has been dominated by the logic of a market economy. According to Berger, when religious traditions multiply and depend on voluntary loyalty, they become marketing agents and religious traditions become consumer commodities.<sup>60</sup>

Maria Einstein traces how various religious movements adopted the norms of the marketing world.<sup>61</sup> It is an interesting search, why the notion of religious pluralism was then developed on a large scale by the West, both in western countries and in Muslim countries. A lot of funds are disbursed to Islamic organizations and NGOs who believe in and are willing to campaign for this understanding in Indonesia.<sup>62</sup>

Indonesia, which is a Muslim-majority country, should be more careful before allowing religious pluralism to enter Indonesia. Adhering to the notion of religious pluralism means justifying the teachings of John Hick's thoughts about the religious concept itself. The basis for the emergence of the notion of religious pluralism is actually contrary to Islamic values. John Hick, a professor of Christian theology, who sparked global theology, stated in his book that (1) Jesus never taught that he was a "reincarnated god"; (2) It is impossible to trace the development of the doctrine of the incarnation in the Bible which was actually formulated at the Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon; (3) The language used by the Bible in the matter of 'divine incarnation' is metaphorical, not literal.<sup>63</sup> Meanwhile, Islam does not experience complicated theological problems like Christianity does. Islam also does not experience historical problems as well as Christianity. So that Muslims collectively do not experience traumatic conditions when talking about religion.<sup>64</sup>

Muslims have never faced the problem of martyrdom (*istishhād*), so in Christianity, the question of martyrdom has become a topic of great discussion and controversy. Such theological conditions are not found in Islam. In fact, the Shi'a group does not differ in opinion regarding the concept of the oneness of Allah and the prophethood of Muhammad. Since the time of Prophet Muhammad, Muslims have inherited the concepts of Islamic theology and religious rituals perfectly. In fact, the name of this religion has also been given by Allah, through the Qur'an. The name of this religion does not refer to the name of the place or the name of the person, but the name is Islam, the only name of the religion given by its holy book.<sup>65</sup>

If Western civilization then develops and forces this understanding to be adhered to by adherents of existing religions, it is understandable, because Western civilization is essentially 'anti-religious', as Muhammad Asad (Leopold Weiss) said: "...So the characteristics of civilization of the modern West cannot be accepted either by Christianity or Islam or by other religions, because at its deepest core it is irreligious."<sup>66</sup>

Wilfred Cantwell Smith defines Islam as an activity of submission to God and not the name of an institution. The term Islam, with the meaning of a religious system, only emerged in the historical process. So, according to Smith, true religion does not refer to the name of a particular religion, but is a form of activity, namely a form of submission (obedience).<sup>67</sup>

Smith's opinion is different from that of James Robson, who wrote an article entitled '*Islam' as a Term*, in the April 1954 edition of the *Journal (Christian Mission) Muslim World*. He wrote, "When the word 'Islam' is used, it has a different meaning." Robson points to AQur'anic verses, "Inna ad-Dīna 'indallāhi'l-Islām" (*Indeed, religious with Allah is Islām*)<sup>68</sup> and "Al-yawma akmaltu lakum dīnakum (*Today I have perfected your religion for you*)"<sup>69</sup> as examples. These verses show that Islam does not only mean "submission to God" but has

developed into the name of one religion (proper name).<sup>70</sup> As a way, Islam is the straight path, the right path (*ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*), leading to God. Therefore, all acts of worship are required based on faith. It is not valid for one's deeds of worship, unless he believes in things that must be believed in, according to the Islamic conception, the main points of which are explained in the Articles of Faith (*arkān al-īman*).

It is with that zeal and belief that Muslims throughout history have been eager to spread Islam throughout the world. They believe that Islam is the only way of salvation. This belief does not allow Muslims to impose their religion, let alone kill other human beings, because of religious differences. If such an attitude is said to be an “exclusive in theology” attitude, it is evident that this attitude does not bring bad consequences to mankind of other religions. This is different from Christian history when they apply “theological exclusivity” and designate ‘heretics or infidels’ as the party that must be destroyed.<sup>71</sup>

Hans Kung, a professor of Catholic theology, explained that there are four positions regarding religious truth: (1) All religions are false (No religion is true or all religions are equally untrue). This is the position of the atheist. (2) There is only one true religion (Only one religion is true, or all other religions are untrue). This is a traditional Catholic position, as explained by early Christian figures, viz., Origen, Cyprian, Augustine, and standardized in the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). The Council of Florence (1442) emphasized that the way to salvation is to become a member of the Catholic Church. We will discuss this second position further, because it is an important historical phenomenon in Western civilization which later gave rise to secularization, liberalization, and theological pluralism. (3) All religions are true (Every religion is true, or all religions are equally true). If all religions are true, whereas in fact, religions are different, then which religion is considered true? Even more complicated is indefining what is called religion itself. (4) One religion is the true one and all religions play a role in the truth of one religion (One religion is the true one or all religions participate in the truth of the one religion). This idea tends to lead to syncretization or the formation of a new religion that is different from the existing religion.<sup>72</sup>

Judging from its history, religious pluralism began to be introduced Indonesia in 1962. As stated by Adian Husaini, “Proponents of religious pluralism in Indonesia usually associate the need to embrace religious understanding with the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).”<sup>73</sup> Religious pluralism is included in the liberalization program of Islam in Indonesia. Religious pluralism has even entered Islamic boarding schools. The concept of the spread of religious pluralism in Indonesia consists of four stages: first, embed the importance of contextualization of *ijtihad*; second, growing commitment to rationality and renewal; third, promoting the idea of acceptance of social pluralism and religious pluralism; fourth, separating religion from political parties and having a non-sectarian state position. These four concepts will harm the understanding of any religion, not only the understanding of Islam.

With the dissemination of four concepts related to religious pluralism, responses emerged from various groups in Indonesia. The first party that responded to the program of religious pluralism in Indonesia was the Catholic group. Pope John Paul II, in 2000, issued the *Dominus Jesus Decree*.<sup>74</sup> This explanation, apart from rejecting the notion of religious pluralism, also reaffirms that Jesus Christ is the only messenger of Divine salvation and no one can get to the Father other than through Jesus.

After the response from the Catholics, five years later, a fatwa was issued by the Central Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), rejecting the notion of religious pluralism. On July 29, 2005, the MUI publishes fatwa decisions (No. 7 / MUNAS VII / MUI / II / 2005)<sup>75</sup> relating to the prohibition of pluralism, liberalism, and secularism. First, the rule of law, pluralism, secularism, and religious liberalism as referred to in the first part as ideas that conflict with the religious teachings of Islam. Second, it is forbidden for Muslims, accordingly, to follow pluralism, secularism, and religious liberalism. Third, in matters of faith and worship, Muslims must be exclusive, in the sense that it prohibited (*harām*) to mix the beliefs (*'aqā'id*) and worship (*'ibādah*) of the Muslims with those of adherents of other religions; fourth, for Muslim communities who live with adherents of other religions (religious plurality), in social problems which are not related to beliefs and worship, the followers of Islam are inclusive, in the sense of continuing to engage in social interaction with adherents of other religions provided that it is not mutually detrimental.<sup>76</sup>

Apart from contradicting the MUI fatwa, religious pluralism is also contrary to the foundation of the Indonesian state itself. The first two paragraphs of Article 29 of the 1945 Indonesian Constitution thus states: “ (1) The state is based on Belief in the One and Only God. (2) The state guarantees the freedom of each resident to embrace their own religion and to worship according to their religion and beliefs.”<sup>77</sup> This reflects that Indonesia guarantees its citizens to embrace their respective religions and carry out religious practices according to the religion they believe in. The notion of religious pluralism is not in accordance with the foundation of the Indonesian state because in religious pluralism, every religion is considered to originate from one God. In fact, every religion believes that only God in their religion is true.

## CONCLUSION

Religious pluralism is not a solution to the diversity of religions and harmony of human life. Instead, it is giving rise to a new polemic between religions that imposes understanding to equate all religions although the concepts of each religion are clearly different, and cannot be equated. This understanding will only make religions lose their identity and slowly disappear without any followers believing in them.

The correlation between religious pluralism and neoliberalism is divided into two segments; namely, the connection in the spread of the notion of religious pluralism and related to the practice of the religion itself. Regarding the spread of religious pluralism, neoliberalism can be said to have played a big role. The source of the idea of religious pluralism is the ideas of John Hick, a Western philosopher who considers that all divine religions originate from the same God. The West, aside from being the party that sparked the idea of religious pluralism for the first time, is also the party that supports the development of this understanding in other regions of the world.

Religious pluralism did not receive a warm welcome from religious leaders, most especially from Catholicism and Islam. The practice of religious pluralism in Indonesia is not only contrary to the 1945 Constitution, but also contrary to the Catholic Dominus Jesus Decree and the MUI fatwa No. 7/MUNAS VII/MUI/II/2005.

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