

The Concept of the Universality of Islam and Catholicism and the Reality of Their Dynamics in Humanity

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ABSTRACT

Human life is closely related to a pluralistic reality. Pluralism is a world reality that cannot be avoided and rejected. Pluralism itself needs to be considered a gift God gives humans. A pluralistic world provides more color to human life. This requires an attitude of inclusiveness in social life so that humans can avoid harmful conflicts. The attitude of inclusiveness can be found in the universalistic spirit of the two major religions. Catholic Christianity and Islam adhere to universalism in spreading their religious teachings. Almost in every part of the world, we can find adherents of Christianity, Catholicism, and Islam. Universalism in both religious teachings requires everyone to be able to join as a member regardless of ethnic and national background. Inclusiveness in the spirit of the universalism of the two religions is often tarnished by the actions of fundamentalist extremist individuals or groups. The particular group's activities certainly cannot generalize the whole teaching in the religion. However, it can be a warning that the echo of exclusivity needs to be echoed again.

ABSTRAK

Kehidupan manusia erat dengan realitas yang plural. Pluralisme merupakan realitas dunia yang tidak dapat dihindarkan dan ditolak. Pluralisme sendiri perlu dianggap sebagai anugerah yang diberikan Tuhan kepada manusia. Dunia yang plural memberikan warna yang lebih kepada kehidupan manusia. Hal ini menuntut sikap inklusifitas dalam kehidupan sosial agar manusia dapat terhindarkan dari konflik yang merugikan. Sikap inklusifitas dapat kita temukan dalam semangat universalisme dari dua agama besar. Kristen Katolik dan Islam menganut paham universalisme dalam menyebarkan ajaran agamanya. Hampir di setiap belahan dunia kita dapat menemukan penganut agama Kristen Katolik dan Islam. Universalisme dalam kedua ajaran agama tersebut menghendaki setiap orang untuk dapat bergabung sebagai anggota tanpa melihat latar belakang suku dan bangsa. Inklusifitas dalam semangat universalisme kedua agama seringkali tercoreng oleh tindakan perorangan atau kelompok ekstremis fundamentalis. Tindakan kelompok partikular tersebut tentu tidak dapat mengeneralisir keseluruhan ajaran dalam agama tersebut. Akan tetapi, hal tersebut dapat menjadi peringatan bahwa gaung eksklusifisme perlu digemakan kembali.

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1. Introduction

The word universal will always be synonymous with inclusiveness. This is shown from the two words which both refer to ideas open to anyone without fear of being bumped into by existing boundaries. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, universal means something that is done or involves everyone in the world or in a particular group. Meanwhile, Universal in the Big Indonesian Dictionary means "general" (applies to everyone or the whole world), is (encompasses) the entire world (Oxford, 2020).

Something universal presupposes that the boundaries that make a group exclusive are opened and released so that the spirit of inclusiveness is awakened. In the concept of Universality, inclusiveness is two inseparable things. Inclusiveness can stand alone because it does not need to be universal to be inclusive, while universality is impossible as long as it is not inclusive. How can something be adaptable if there is still exclusivity that results in not everyone being able to do and be involved in it.

In the dynamics of religious life, the nuances of universality are not new. The concept of divinity or substance that overcomes human life on earth is something that every ethnic group in the world must have. Indeed, carrying out rituals and recruiting members that can be contained in each belief is still limited to specific groups or people who live in a particular society. Although there are exclusivity of rites and members, the concept of divinity found in every culture around the world is the seed of the dynamics of the concept of universality in religious life.

Christianity became the first religion to patent universality as the main element in the dynamics of the life of faith. This is in line with the message conveyed by Jesus before He ascended to Heaven, namely *"Go, make disciples of all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do everything I have commanded you, and know that I am with you always, until the end of the age."* (cf. Matthew 28:19-20). The longer Christianity navigates the dynamics of the times, the Church Fathers, through synods and councils held to discuss matters related to doctrine and doctrine, formulate that four things form the basis of church life, namely One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. The meaning of Universality is found in the word Catholic which in Greek means general or universal.

The claim of universal religion is not only owned by Christianity. Over time, the religion of Islam emerged which also brought universality as one of the elements in the dynamics of their faithful life. The universality of Islam is increasingly shown by the speed of spread that occurs in the dynamic process of the development of Islam. Islam opens opportunities for everyone from every tribe, people, and nation to accept the path of truth and fulfillment as the message that was brought by the Prophet Muhammad.

By seeing the concept of universality in Christianity and Islam, a problem arises that intrigues the writers. Judging from the universal concept referenced by the Great Indonesian Language Dictionary and the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, universal means something general, done, or involving all people worldwide or not limited by a certain exclusivity. The universal concept claimed by Christianity and Islam shows that two universal meanings may refer to certain exclusivism. Therefore, the authors want to discover the meaning of universality in each religion, Christianity (in this case refers to Catholic Christianity) and Islam. The author wants to find a bright spot whether universality in the doctrines of the two religions leads to inclusiveness or is trapped in certain exclusivity.

This scientific paper intends to provide a broader and deeper insight related to the idea of Universality contained in Christianity and Islam. It is also hoped that it will correct erroneous perceptions related to the concept of universality, which tends to be led to pseudo inclusiveness and presents exclusivity in religious life with a universal character. This paper wants to give light to the minds of all readers of the correct and appropriate insight as contained in every existing doctrine. The visible differences will also be seen as aspects that add to the wealth of viewpoints to get to know one religion better. As stated in the concept of Open Integrity, this research also uses an open Integrity way of thinking as a starting point for research that enriches the faithful life of all readers.

2. Result and Discussion

a. The Concept of Catholic Christian Universality

As already written, the existence of universality in Catholic Christianity has been shown through the word "Catholic" itself. Catholic in Greek means universal and the opposite of local or particular. Therefore, the definition offered by the KBBI and Oxford Dictionaries regarding universality has more or less the exact dimensions as the meaning of the word "Catholic" in the Catholic Christian Church. In his book, *Catechesis XVIII*, Cyril of Jerusalem describes the essence of Catholicism embedded in the Church because of the people and teachings that spread worldwide. Universality can be seen from the dimension of place, the human level, and the dimension of time (Aquinas, 1979).

Thomas Aquinas explained that all people worldwide could accept the dimension of place related to the teachings spread without exception. People from Asia, the Far East, Europe, and Africa, are entitled to receive the instructions conveyed by Christ himself. The dimensions of the human level also show that anyone has the right to accept God's offer to all humanity, be it men, women, widows, widowers, celibacy, families, servants, masters, children, and even parents. All who give themselves accept the salvation offered by God and repent are accepted with open arms as children of God. The dimension of time to express that the Catholic Christian Church will never end has existed since Abel offered sacrifices to God until the fullness of the end of time when the Lord will come a second time.

The statement that Thomas Aquinas has presented about the element of universality in Catholicism seems to be reaffirmed by Philipp Melanchthon which is again presented by Avery Dulles, "Why...Church is called Catholic? Because it is an assembly dispersed throughout the whole earth and because its members, wherever they are, and however separated in place, embrace and externally profess one, and the same utterance of true doctrine in all ages from the beginning until the very end..." (Dulles, 1987). Cyrilius, Aquinas, and Melanchthon formulate Catholic universality in the unity of the people who are members of it. God unites all the people into one Church as Jesus commanded to do in Matthew 28:19-20.

In the Second Vatican Council, the element of universality in the Catholic Church was reformulated by using a new perspective. This is done against an increasingly advanced world that demands a Church that must renew itself so that it is timeless and capable of continuing to sail amid the "Ocean of Life". This universality is poured into various documents, becoming the breath of renewal in the Church. The Church strives to carry out the spirit of *aggiornamento* or "open the windows wide" to let "new winds" enter and renew the atmosphere in the Church.

One of the points raised by the Church in formulating its universality is that the Church is one of the sacraments of God's salvation in the world. In the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (RM) in article no. 9 that "the Church has been established as a universal sacrament of immersion" (Dulles, 1992). It is written that the redemptive mission carried out by Jesus was aimed not only at the Jews or only to those who had believed in Him and repented. Christ's redemptive mission is in fact intended and also felt for those who are outside the union with the Catholic Church. On *Lumen Gentium* (LG) art. 1, it is written that "Salvation which has been implemented by God, and proclaimed by the Church with joy, is for everyone" (De Mey, 2014). It is also explained there that in Matthew 28:19, Jesus did not want the disciples to form an exclusive group, but rather a group consisting of a collection of nations and from all walks of life.

In living this spirit, the Church does it in every service and charitable work she does, especially for those who are weak, sick, small, and marginalized. Concretely, the Church is here to help people under the control of a government dictatorship by providing sacramental services with totality. In addition, the Pope called for every refugee victim of war to be accommodated and accepted by the countries they fled. The Pope also paid attention to the inmates of prisons as well as the sick so that they feel welcomed and get concrete evidence that God has not forsaken them and shows the face of mercy through the people He has sent. "The church must be a freely given place of mercy where everyone can feel accepted, loved, forgiven, and supported to live the good life of the gospel" (Jelahu, 2016).

Viktorahadi attempts to summarize the idea of universality of religious truth according to John Hick. It is written that for centuries, Christianity considered that only in itself the truth about the concept of God became absolute and found its centrality. Christianity is one of the efforts made by humans to interpret the absolute truth and find its centralization there. It was found that every religion also promises salvation for its adherents (Viktorahadi, 2021). In this case, the concept of universality in the Catholic Church, which tends to be exclusive because of its claim as a single religion that carries absolute truth, is dismantled.

By acknowledging the truth in the promises of salvation offered in other religions, the Catholic Church is increasingly strengthening the concrete dimension of universality. Viktorahadi confirms what Hick said by explaining that salvation applies universally because the presence of Jesus Christ, who brings salvation, does not apply only to Christians. Therefore, no one has the right to judge others as people who do not get salvation because God has provided salvation for all humanity without exception (Viktorahadi, 2021).

b. The Concept of Islamic Universality

Humans live in a plural world. The world is so vast that it shapes humans into various forms, from physical to cultural patterns. The initiator of the establishment of the Umar Faithful Brotherhood Forum (FPUB), KH. Abdul Muhaimin assumes that pluralism is a blessing from God. Diversity is also human nature itself. Rejecting pluralism means rejecting human nature, God's grace (Subkhan, 2007). One example is Indonesia which consists of many tribes and languages. Each tribe has a unique way of thinking and behaving. Amid different cultures, Indonesian people bind themselves to become one nation within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

Amid the diversity that exists in the world, Islam is present and unites humankind regardless of skin color, ethnicity, and language. Islamic civilization spread rapidly in the VII century AD from North Africa and the Iberian peninsula, moving into Central Asia, the Subcontinent, to Southeast Asia (Mosiri, 2018). Islamic civilization in question is not only political power, but the local community accepts the teachings of Islam itself. Prophet Muhammad SAW did not teach his followers to impose the teachings of Islam on the territory occupied by Islam. He did not demand a truth claim but took the attitude of agreeing in disagreement. Religion is not something that should be forced on everyone. Prophet Muhammad SAW followed the will of Allah SWT that there is no compulsion in religion (Ghazali, 2009; Rahman & Saebani, 2018).

In the Arabic dictionary, the word Islam contains several meanings, including; *al-Islam* 'surrender', *as-salam* 'holy, clean', *as-salaam* 'prosperous', and *as-silmu* 'peace' (Dewi, 2013). This is in line with the statement above that Islam does not bring its teachings by force to everyone. Coercion in religion will destroy the meaning of Islam itself as a religion that brings peace. Allah SWT rebuked some of the Prophet's companions who decided on financial assistance to some adherents of other faiths. The verse of the Qur'an reads: "*It is not your obligation to make them get guidance, but Allah guides them to whom He wills. Whatever good wealth you spend (even to non-Muslims), then the reward is for you.*" (Qs: al-Mumtahanah: 8). From the quote from the Koran above, we can see that guidance comes from God, not from human coercion.

Islam is a universal religion that does not limit itself to a particular place and time (M.Lapidus, 2002). Islam in any part of the world will remain one, although sects may differ. Islam will also always be Islam. A particular place and time do not bind Islamic teachings. This is related to cosmopolitics in Islamic civilization. Cosmopolitanism is a view that tends to break the bonds of nationalism so that it views the cosmos as a polis (one's own country) (Dewi, 2013). This view makes ethnic boundaries fade and unites them in Islamic civilization. The essence of Islam itself does not lie in ethnicity and ancestors, but in the oneness of Allah SWT (Kurzman, 2019). The oneness of Allah SWT has implications for the unity of mankind as recorded in the Qur'an: "*O Humans! Verily, We created you from a male and a female pair, then made you into nations and tribes, so that you may know one another and not despise one another. Verily, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the one who is most pious among you* (Q. 49:13) (Rahman, 2021).

Islamic universalism then led him to inculturation with local cultures. Islam has 3 attitudes in doing inculturation including; 1) Strictly reject things that are contrary to the principles of Islamic teachings. 2) Support things that are useful for the conduciveness and development of Islamic society. 3) Letting go of things that are not directly useful for the Islamic community as long as it does not conflict with the principles of Islamic teachings (Mosiri, 2018).

This inclusive nature makes Islam easier to accept in places where Islamic teachings are preached. Prophet Muhammad emphasized three essential things when preaching, namely *ukwah* (brotherhood), *hurriyah* (freedom), and *musawah* (equality) (Dowd, 2016). All human beings have the right to know the teachings of Islam because they are equal as brothers and sisters without coercion.

c. Dynamics of the Universality Concept in Islam and Catholicism

In the last century, the world sees Islam as a religion that thirsts for blood. The pious practice of *Jihad* understood and implemented incorrectly by its adherents, brought a wind of fear to major countries in the Western hemisphere, especially on the September 11, 2001 Incident, when Muslim extremists targeted the WTC tower in the United States (Dugan & Fisher, 2022; Kushner, 2022). The world has also become angry when in recent years, ISIS has attacked world peace with its persecution movement for everyone who does not want to walk with those who want the establishment of a caliphate in the world (Luna & Zoltan, 2015; Rekawek, 2015).

It does not have to be far away in the far-off western world, Indonesia is often the target of threats by Muslim extremists and has even become a breeding ground for extremists. The stories of extremists in Indonesia often make people in Indonesia hurt. One major terror that claimed many lives was the Bali bombings volume one and two. The bomb attack targeted a crowded nightclub on Bali island. Hundreds of people died, most of whom were foreign nationals on vacation to the island of Bali. The terror had brought fear to tourists who wanted to travel to Indonesia. The eyes of the world had highlighted Indonesia as a dangerous place to visit (del Pozo, 2021; Dolven et al., 2018).

The Al-Qaeda group allegedly carried out the terror act from a faraway country. However, their religious understanding and concept reached Indonesia. They are in the name of Islam as the basis of every terror they carry out. They proudly proclaim themselves as perpetrators of terror and consider their actions to be noble actions that are in line with the will of God. They assumed that the place where they carried out the suicide bombing was an infidel place. In particular, the place contains foreign tourists from the Americas and Europe (Cengiz & Karademir, 2020; Kozera & Popławski, 2019).

In addition to acts of terror carried out by a group of Muslim extremists, we can also see acts of persecution against religious sects outside Islam. Minority groups quite often get pre-execution actions from fundamentalist extremist Muslims. One of the minority groups that quite often gets pre-execution actions is the Ahmadiyya group. The Ahmadiyah group are adherents of Islam who are viewed as heretical by some Indonesian Muslim communities. Therefore, mosques and their Koran groups are often raided because they are considered not in line with the teachings of pure Islam as taught by the Prophet. Their mosques were burned and Ahmadis were ostracized from society (Irawan & Adnan, 2021; Putra et al., 2018).

Intolerance is also carried out against those of different religions. Minority groups such as Protestant or Catholic Christians find it difficult to establish places of worship. Licensing regulations to build places of worship make it difficult for minorities to build their places of worship. The existing regulations require that the majority of the place or land to be built for a place of worship needs to be approved by the majority of the local community. This regulation seems to require the Indonesian people to live in certain religious groups. This certainly makes it difficult for the minorities who live scattered and not grouped in the same place. Actions against building places of worship are often associated with acts of Christianization (Ichwan et al., 2020; Tampubolon & Aziz, 2021).

As has happened in Islam, as has been described above, almost the same dynamics have afflicted Christianity. The persecution movement was carried out by Christianity when Christianity became the religion of the Roman empire in the early millennium. In the XIII century, the Catholic Church also started the inquisition movement, which became the largest persecution movement ever carried out.

The presentation of these examples also illustrates that the Church cannot be separated from activity contrary to the spirit of universality, which is the name attached to itself (Tarrant, 2022; Thomas, 2019).

Efforts to re-establish universality began to be re-ignited and driven by the movement that was started within the Catholic Church in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. The Church looks back at universality as an element that must be fought for as the name attached to the Church. Things that made the Church an exclusive community began to be addressed and renewed. The concept of *Extra Ecclesia Nulla Salus* finds its lowest point in the council results, which re-established the universality the Church acknowledges and is evident in the religions that go hand in hand with the Church (Andersen & Jensen, 2019; Igelmo Zaldívar & Lemke Duque, 2018).

Efforts to dialogue and establish harmony in the life of society, and the state continue to be echoed and carried out amid the plurality that exists in the world (Arifianto et al., 2021; Stewart et al., 2020). There have been many attempts by both sides to break down the walls of exclusivity and extremism that have been built up over centuries. These efforts constantly clash with radical groups who often have errors interpreting the truth each religion is trying to achieve. This does not only happen in terms of the Islamic religion, as is the case in general in Indonesia.

In other parts of Indonesia, especially in the eastern region, where Christianity is the majority religion, there are also acts of intolerance committed by the majority adherents. It is undeniable that wherever there is a majority, the minority is often marginalized, and there is a high probability that a "step-child" situation will occur.

3. Conclusion

The description of the various situations above clearly illustrates the ineffectiveness of the universality concept in Islam and Catholicism. These intolerant actions even led to acts of violence, damaging the good name of each religion in the eyes of the world. Fundamentalist extremist groups, in the name of a particular religion, certainly do not represent the whole of that religion. These things cannot be used as material to generalize the actions of certain specific groups into general group actions.

Religious leaders have a significant role in calling for universal teachings contained in each religion. The walls of exclusivity that are built must be bravely attacked and torn down with universality weapons that bring inclusiveness to social life. Silence and refusal to interfere with particular fundamental groups with a wrong understanding will not solve the problem and make it more challenging to realize the universality aspired to. The spirit of refreshing the teachings of universality in every religion should be applied thoroughly and simultaneously so that the impact can be felt and produce the fruit of harmony in social life.

The Catholic Church has proven that a paradigm shift can occur and destroy exclusive doctrines in its religious body. This should also be hope for Muslim brothers so that efforts to enforce the concept of universality are increasingly echoed. Actions characterized by exclusive attitudes have proven to be the sources of problems in the world. Efforts to bring the concepts of universality to the smallest group can break down the dilemma built up due to the exclusivity that has been echoed so far. Therefore, the courage to speak out for truth and renewal must always be firmly held and fueled continuously so that it does not become just an empty cry. The concept of universality is the key to harmony in living life in this very plural world.

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