





Early church hospitality-based Pentecostal mission in the religious moderation frame of Indonesia



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In Indonesia, violence in the name of religion has occurred many times since the reformation began. The trigger is religious fundamentalism and radicalism that increases and affects intolerant actions, inter-religious conflicts and even terrorism. The Indonesian government has initiated religious moderation through the Ministry of Religion to minimise the negative impacts of excessive religious fanaticism. Christians, who are often victims of many acts of violence, should evaluate the religious practices that have been carried out so far. The mission of Christian evangelism has been a scourge that triggered anti-Christian sentiments, thus giving rise to the stigma of Christianisation. One of the most energetic Christian groups with an evangelistic mission is the Pentecostal group. This article aims to propose constructing the Pentecostal mission, which is rooted in the religious life of the early church as a mission model, through the discourse of their hospitality. The thesis is that hospitality, especially embodied by the early church, expresses a moderate religious way. Therefore, this mission is very suitable to be implemented by Pentecostal groups in Indonesia, which takes a theological locus on the Pentecost narratives in Acts 2.

Contribution: This article addresses early church hospitality as a discourse of Pentecostal mission, especially in Indonesia. This article considers that hospitality can be a model for doing church missions in the frame of religious moderation in Indonesia.

Keywords: church mission; church hospitality; early church; interreligious; Pentecostalism; pentecostal church; Pentecostal mission; religious moderation.

Introduction

Christianity is an experience of religious life that cannot be separated from the reflection of Jesus Christ's life with the disciples through the narrative of the Scriptures, especially the New Testament. Throughout the period in which he was a human on Earth, besides ministering and demonstrating miracles, Jesus also taught, the most well-known teaching being summarised as the doctrine of love, loving God and each other (Mt 22:37–39). This teaching of love was then recognised as an inherent identity for Christians, although some saddening facts throughout history have contrasted with the doctrine. Love as the identity of the Christian religion seemed to be questioned by some conflicts that occurred inside the church and even during the wars between nations of Christian backgrounds (World Wars I and II). Religion becomes vulnerable to the interests of its adherents, which are often disguised or overlap God's mission with the adherents. This at least was shown in the period of church and political romanticism in the Middle Ages, which triggered the Crusades. The church that should imitate Christ's living of love (Volf 1998) was trapped in violence in the name of religion.

Christians' religious life imitates not only the life of Jesus but also the apostles and their teachings. Christian groups like the Pentecostals take the early church's religious life as a theological pattern (Menziez 2013); they were inspired by the early church's growth and multiplication, besides the ministry that demonstrated the miraculous power of God. This pattern then resulted in the Pentecostal group experiencing a more rapid and significant growth rather than other Christian groups: '525 million adherents in the year 2000 ... 28 percent of the total Christian population and about 8.65 percent of the world population' (Yong 2005:19). The growth of the Pentecostal and Charismatic groups in Indonesia is also to be reckoned with (Aritonang 2012), although it sometimes affects conflicts, either internally or against church denominations and even other faith groups. At least two sentiments have emerged as consequences regarding the Pentecostals' growth in Indonesia, from other church groups, triggered by church members' migration, and from other religions, caused by the escalating of non-Christian conversion. This situation

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ultimately leads to the stigma of Christianisation because of the evangelisation mission by Christians in general. Moreover, the 'Western religion' labelling has increased anti-Christian attitudes that culminated with the actions of intolerance against the church, both verbal and physical violence in the form of destroying churches, persecution and even murder. It is truly what Mark Juergensmeyer (2003) and William Cavanaugh (2009) saw as critical reflections on religion as the root of violence.

Ideally, religion is expected to stimulate human values for its adherents (Siahaan, Kause & Siagian 2022). However, in Indonesia today, a nation also known as a religious state, religion is often used as a political tool that exacerbates inter-religious conflicts (Nasrudin 2018; Saputro 2018a). The election of the Indonesian president in 2019 and the governor of Jakarta in 2017 showed how religion is used as a political identity (Nasrudin & Nurdin 2019; Saputro 2018b; Sari 2016). This situation motivated the Indonesian government to declare religious moderation (Akhmadi 2019; Arif 2021; Junaedi 2019) to minimise violence in the name of religion by recognising and respecting religious diversity. This programme cannot run well without support from all elements of the nation, including church and Christian groups. The church is expected to be able to be present in a pluralistic space of togetherness without ignoring its missionary characteristics, instead ignoring efforts to conquer differences.

Pentecostals do not need to lose their characteristics when encountering diversity, like other religions, in the public sphere. The problem is that what Pentecostals do through reflection on the early church's life (Menziez 2013) has not been holistic yet. Pentecostal groups tend to articulate the life of the early church as a ministry that demonstrates God's power and mission, which has implications for the multiplication and expansion of the church (Menziez & Menziez 2000), while paying less attention to social relations, especially addressing differences without having to make them 'Christian'. The public encounter room seems to only be an evangelistic space because it is motivated by the spirit of 'saving souls', which leads to conversion. Amos Yong (2007, 2008) suggested framing the life of the early church with hospitality, and through this discourse, he built inter-religious dialogue in the context of conflicts in Nigeria, Sri Lanka and even the United States of America. Amy Oden (2001) did the same thing, emphasising that reading of the Acts should be framed in hospitality. This is what prompted the construction of the early church modelling related to the mission of the Pentecostal church in the current disruptive era, especially in the context of Indonesia.

The thesis of this article is that hospitality reflects moderate religious life. This article proposes a construction of the early church's hospitality as a way for Pentecostals to do missions in Indonesia's religious moderation context. The Pentecostal Church not only articulates the early church's ministry as a model but also its hospitality. By using a descriptive analysis method through searching various kinds of literature, this

article presents the discourse on early church hospitality, religious moderation and the mission of the Pentecostal church as instruments to build the construction of a Pentecostal mission that is useful in strengthening religious moderation in Indonesia.

Hospitality as Indonesian identity

Indonesians are well-known as hospitable people. It is embedded in the natural life of Indonesians. It distinguishes Indonesians in public life. A man who maintains the general values of hospitality is regarded as a pure Indonesian. However, there is no official law that sets the values of hospitality; it is a heritage from the ancestors and lived in the social life of Indonesians. Investigating the hospitality of Indonesians requires an appropriate starting point. Andrew Shepherd stated that Derrida argued, 'ethics is hospitality, and hospitality is ethics' (Shepherd 2014:53), meaning that Derrida engaged hospitality with ethics, while ethics is a broad topic and hospitality is a narrow one. Therefore, hospitality receives less attention as it is sometimes related to ethics, even love. Based on this idea, the narrow sense of hospitality connects with ethics. It means that the hospitality of Indonesia relates to the Indonesian code of ethics; then, hospitality is the manifestation of a certain code of ethics in Indonesia. Hospitality must cross boundaries, self and others, and public and private, and it stands for cultures (Calvo & Sánchez 2016). This idea adds another point to hospitality; it does not simply connect with ethics but also stands for cultures. Consequently, defining Indonesian hospitality requires a consideration of the ethics and cultures of Indonesia. It is about the relationship between a person and others. Hospitality rules how an Indonesian should relate with others. It encompasses the relationship between private and public life. In short, hospitality is not limited to certain same groups but crosses the boundaries of ethnicity, race, kinship and even religion.

The recognition of Indonesia as a hospitable country is maintained meticulously by Indonesians. It is a special identity in Indonesia. A national TV show in Japan recognised Indonesia as the most hospitable country in the world. Further, Dr Muhammad Amin, a senior lecturer from the Al-Azhar University of Egypt, acknowledges the hospitality of Indonesian students in Egypt (Albama 2017). These recognitions do not come as a symbolic or hyperbolic expression, because the hospitality of Indonesia is truly alive among Indonesians and directly impacts other segments of life. For instance, Dr Muhammad Amin regards the spread of Islam in Indonesia as easier compared with other countries. There was not even a single war to spread Islam in Indonesia because of its hospitality. Based on Derrida's notion, the hospitality of Indonesia could be seen in the code of ethics of Indonesia. At the same time, the hospitality of Indonesians is manifested in the code of ethics and etiquette of Indonesian culture. Regarding hospitality in terms of welcoming strangers, Indonesians have a code of smiling. Indonesians use smiles to initiate contact and restrain negative expressions, arrogance and hostility. Smiling is a social icebreaker for

Indonesians and is considered a polite way to respect strangers (Draine & Hall 1986:268). Further, Indonesians received awards from two Swedish organisations, called Better Business and the International Mystery Shopping Alliance, which conducted 'The 2009 Smiling Report', as the most smiley and pleasant people in the world (Indonesian Matters 2009).

Hospitality is an identity of Indonesians. Indonesia is a pluralistic society in terms of ethnicity, linguistics, culture and others, but the diversity in religions is a predominant issue in Indonesia. The result is that Indonesia also became a pluralistic society in terms of religion. Pluralism is part of Indonesian society and is a phenomenon that cannot be avoided. Human beings who live in pluralism are pluralism themselves (Coward 1995:45). Pluralism exists among Indonesians. This idea should lead Indonesians to respond in positive ways instead of restraining pluralism. However, Indonesian hospitality and religion are strongly connected. The religious pluralism in Indonesia directly impacts the concept of the hospitality of religious people. Indonesian hospitality is pluralistic because of religious pluralism. Indonesians keep the values and codes of hospitality from their culture. Besides the culture, religious thought plays an important role in the Indonesian view regarding hospitality. Nevertheless, religious pluralism becomes a challenge for Indonesians in defining hospitality and practising it in public life. Therefore, hospitality is an opportunity for Pentecost's mission to offer moderation between religions in Indonesia. Hospitality is part of Indonesian identity and compatible with Pentecost's mission.

Pentecost and the spirit of hospitality

The idea of Pentecost regarding hospitality is clearly and comprehensively conveyed by Yong (2008) or Daniela Augustine (2012). We agree with Yong's thesis about Pentecost, which is engaged with the hospitality of the early church undertaken by the Holy Spirit. The spirit who moved the early church doing hospitality now works in the church by making the early church their model. The Pentecostal church today is not supposed to ignore the work of the spirit engaged in hospitality, not merely being oriented to ministry that demonstrates God's power of miracles or divine healing, which implies church growth missions. The life of the early church presented by the author of Acts was complete, so the modelling carried out by the Pentecostal church should also manifest it holistically. Pentecostals today must imitate the hospitality of the early church, besides the powerful ministry.

The hospitality topic has not yet become an interesting theological discourse within the framework of Pentecostalism in Indonesia. Some research has been undertaken on hospitality engaging Pentecostalism, such as responding to humanitarian issues during the past pandemic (Siahaya & Siahaan 2021) or encouraging the sociopolitical participation of Pentecostals in Indonesia (Widjaja, Siahaan & Octavianus 2021), in addition to building the idea of gender equality

(Rinukti, Siahaan & Putri 2022). The reason might be that Pentecostals in Indonesia are still too comfortable building a theology based on individual and group pragmatism. The phenomenon of megachurch programmes or mega-liturgies that are entertaining might indicate that comfort zone. We do not assess it as a mistake but instead as something unproportional. Hospitality can be a key point to proportionate it, as the early church showed.

Did the early church have natural hospitality, or were they moved by the apostles' theological understanding that they might have been taught before? Is theological understanding needed for the basis of an attitude like hospitality? If the early church did it naturally, being part of their culture, then how is theological effort needed to stimulate the Pentecostal group's attitude of hospitality in today's modern (or postmodern) era? This is what we emphasise, whether theology is merely a formulation that is considered logically to be taught later; however, it will mean nothing without an effort to live it in oneself and personally. The early church was not a community of new converts who became Christians on the day of Pentecost; they were people who had encountered Jesus in a doctrinal class so that the principles of Christian faith teachings that had been heard were very likely to be revitalised by work of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

Thomas R. Hawkin (1988) introduced hospitality as a form of Christian theology at the end of the 20th century, besides the famous work of Sutherland (2010) using the narrative of Matthew 25:31–46 as a locus of reflection of hospitality. Joas Adiprasetya (2013) simply defined hospitality as an attitude and action of making friends with foreigners. With this simple understanding, it is easy to accept the basic concept of how the church, in social space, treats other identities. The church must be able to treat and make a place for other people (*the other*), who are of different denominations, even religions, within the framework of hospitality (Constantineanu 2018; Koyama 1993). This is an embodiment of what Jesus taught the disciples: love the Lord your God ... love your neighbour as yourself (Mt 22:37–39). The reflection of loving God is shown in loving neighbours, who must not be only of the same identity, like religion; the same teaching is in Luke 10:25–37, in which Jesus opened the disciples' view of 'who is your neighbour' by using the narrative of the good Samaritan. In Jesus' parable, he emphasised the strange existence of the Samaritan to the Jews generally (cf. Jn 4:9, in which Jews have no dealings with Samaritans) as neighbours. So loving God, in Jesus' fundamental teaching, must be reflected in loving neighbours, although they are strangers.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost had implications for the lifestyle of the 120 people left who had been with Jesus before. The early church better understood how they should love others who are not the same. The sameness often becomes a firm reason to love, causing difficulty in receiving differences, either within the internal community of faith or between faiths. Did the early church do well in managing differences, so

that Yong used it as a model to construct interfaith dialogue as an effort of reconciliation? It will depend on how we define *managing well*, because the early church also displayed disputes among them, besides other problems. However, in welcoming the differences that entered their growing community, the early church undertook it very well. Jean Jeffress said that the attitude shown by the early church was a radical form of hospitality, how to be a church (Jeffress 2017). We should understand the point that disputes are dynamic in differences and diversities, where hospitality becomes hands that are welcoming.

Hospitality is no longer merely a doctrine or theology designed to teach people to embody the law of love in an attitude of accepting and respecting differences; it must become spirituality instead, which revitalises the law of love. The spirit that was poured out on the day of Pentecost has embraced diversities and differences, which are expressed in various spoken tongues (Siahaan 2021) so that the spirit of doing religion in Pentecostalism is able to accept differences and treat others equally (Rinukti et al. 2022). At this point, we offer the spirituality of Pentecostalism that is detached from all religions' imperialist and colonialist attributes. Joon-Sik Park's (2002) opinion of hospitality as an evangelisation context does not need to be considered contradictory. It stimulates us instead of facing the reality of Christianity, which cannot be separated from the mission; however, the concept of mission must ignore the Christianising tendencies.

Religious moderation in the Christian perspective: The case of the Indonesian church

Religious moderation, as the government's programme to suppress the escalation of religious radicalism, which tends to trigger acts of violence in the name of religion in Indonesia by prioritising moderate religious practices, is a noble and honourable intention (Arif 2021). This effort is not an act of government political intervention in people's religious life but embodies the noble values of Pancasila as the foundation of Indonesian life. As a pluralistic country in culture and religion, the government must be able to manage Indonesia's diversity as a resource that can develop and carry on the nation. Indonesia is also known as having the largest Muslim population in the world, thus encouraging certain groups to implement the law of Islam as the foundation of the state, replacing Pancasila. This is what ultimately causes fundamentalist and radical movements to arise, affecting conflict, violence and even terrorism. It is expected that religious moderation shall not only become a mere slogan but also become a religious spirit in maintaining the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (well-known as NKRI).

Christianity in Indonesia could be categorised as a moderate religion. This is most possibly affected by Christianity not being the majority in this country. However, the situation may contrast with the intergroup relations within Christianity

itself, where exclusivism still exists among certain churches. We can see on YouTube channels that demeaning certain denominations or pastors considered deviating from the truth of the Scriptures is open to public consumption. Not a few Pentecostal and Charismatic figures received harsh criticism because of their teachings that are considered unbiblical, even to the point of being accused of heresy. It must be realised that some doctrines of Pentecostal or Charismatic churches are extreme and mostly experience-oriented. However, comments and criticism of extreme differences are often delivered in hatred and judgement; this means it is not reflected in religious moderation.

The church is seemingly still struggling with doctrinal exclusivism and still finds it difficult to accept the diverse interpretations and the different theological perspectives at an extreme level, amid the passion for establishing the unity of the body of Christ. Siahaan, Siahaan and Hendra (2022) confirmed that the passion of ecumenicalism, based on the phrase *ut omnes unum sint*, must be articulated in a complete sense, not only calling for unity but also calling for equality. The spirit of unity, motivated by Jesus' prayer in the narrative of John 17:21, can begin to moderate religion. The church must start religious moderation from churching moderation, how to view and treat differences equally, which drives a church's spirituality in a postmodern world that embraces differences.

Religious moderation does not muzzle or even sacrifice the passion of the mission of evangelising for the sake of maintaining the stability of national life, especially in the sociopolitical dimension. Reflecting on the life of the early church, the faith community led by the apostles can be seen from various perspectives; some emphasise the militancy of evangelism, and others prioritise ministry with the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit, but we propose a lens of moderation. This is in line with the hospitality idea initiated by both Yong (2008) and Oden (2001), because the basic idea of moderation is like hospitality to welcome and treat strangers. Moderation denies excessive fanaticism, which leads to fundamentalism and radicalism, but rather embraces differences and makes friends instead (Adiprasetya & Sasongko 2019). The early church displayed this dynamic, so the pattern of this community is a model of religious moderation.

Religious moderation must be reflected in the Christian faith, based on the teachings of Jesus or scriptural narratives. It means that moderation is not a political object that is forced to become theology discourse, either biblically, systematically or practically, for a certain purpose's sake. Moderation is implemented for good goals and purposes and good reflection and expression; our theology must reflect and express it. Some research has shown that reflection, either on the teachings of Jesus (Gultom 2022; Siagian 2022) or other scriptural narratives (Latif, Pangkey & Yulianto 2022; Siahaya et al. 2021). They confirmed that religious moderation is a religious spirit in a Christian context.

Doing hospitality as a Pentecostal mission: Constructing a new paradigm

Constructing a mission within the framework of religious moderation becomes a mutual duty between the church and theological institutions, either belonging to church denominations or faculties of state colleges. Many theological colleges belong to the Pentecostal denomination in Indonesia, and some are expected to contribute to developing theological discourses that will construct mutual religious life. This constructive work seems to be reconceptualising the Pentecostal mission, rooted in the early church's mission. The construct of the Pentecostal mission paradigm that reflected the life of the early church as a model of hospitality and religious (church) moderation is a novel proposal disseminated in this research. Hospitality should not be disguised by the passion of church expansion, because hospitality must be unconditional (Shepherd 2014), even though Park mentioned hospitality as a context of the evangelist mission (Park 2002). The mission here must be articulated as doing hospitality; the church carries out hospitality as an act of mission, embodying the spirit of religious moderation.

Missions in the act of hospitality will not deny the implication of repentance that results in church multiplication or expansion; again, the implication must occur 'naturally'. The multiplication of the early church started with the work of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, followed by the lifestyle transformation of the first community that impacted social favour, as indicated in Acts 2:47. The phrase 'having favour with all the people' in that verse implies two things: the early church did a favour to other people (Andersen 1988), or the early church experienced that favour from people of Jerusalem (Noble 2018). Acts 2:47 ends with the words: And the Lord added ...those that were saved denotes that multiplication happened as the effect of their favour. It simply means that favour most possibly impacts salvation, which implicates multiplication. We can sum up that the early church's hospitality increased their numbers and also their suffering.

The early church favour indicates hospitality; they treat everyone with love ever taught. They might have once been exclusive but embraced their differences after being fulfilled by the Spirit on Pentecost, because that spirit is the hand embracing the world (Adiprasetya 2017). Hospitality expresses love without considering generous feedback, and it is not free of any risk (Augustine 2012). Lakawa (2011) confirmed it in the context of pluralism in Indonesia. Hospitality does not eliminate the worst risks in religious life in an encounter space of difference; on the contrary, it gives Christians the momentum to show the 'face' of Christ to the world. In the Pentecost perspective, hospitality is caused by the spirit's work in the believers (Yong 2007); when hospitality is being practised, it would be the hand of God embracing strangers. Ultimately, when

people repent and become believers, it happens naturally because the spirit touches people's spirits. We do hospitality naturally, and the spirit works in his natural way as well.

Hospitality is embodied as the social action of believers. It is a social encounter space where the church meets its social context, such as culture or other religions. The church cannot avoid the differences encountered. The interreligious encounter in public space is expected to eliminate all religious pretension that tends to convert others. Christians can share their faith through dialogue (Akah & Ajah 2022), as Jesus did with Nicodemus (Widjaja & Siahaan 2020) and with the woman of Samaria (Zebua, Tarigan & Widjaja 2021). The Pentecostals in Indonesia must consider dialogue culture as a mission context. It means hospitality can take place as doing a mission while having inter-religious dialogue.

Conclusion

The Pentecostal mission, which takes a model from the early church, must consider the whole life of that first faith community that displays hospitality as religious moderation. Pentecostals emphasise that the early church's mission focused not only on the ministry that manifested God's power or church multiplication but also on hospitality. Hospitality doesn't need to be articulated as a strategy for reaching out to, even converting, others in evangelisation because hospitality is the mission itself. Hospitality does not eliminate evangelisation as a mission; it never ignores conversion either, but it must be experienced naturally, moved by the spirit that works within people. Hospitality is a way the church does religious life in her social sphere, encounters others in their diversity, and welcomes and treats them as God's hand that embraces all peoples. Hospitality may make people encounter God and have experience with him that may, most possibly, guide them to believe.

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The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Authors' contributions

S.B.R., the first author, made the early draft with some points regarding religious moderation and annotated some bibliographies and methodology used. H.E.R.S. reviewed the draft of S.B.R. and reconstructed it by engaging hospitality discourse with a Pentecostal perspective. H.E.R.S. added some bibliographies regarding hospitality and Pentecostal discourses, analysing systematically and sharpening the core after N.R. contributed some passages about Indonesian hospitality, and A.S.P suggested the possibility of using a biblical reflection regarding the early church mission. N.R. and A.S.P. read the manuscript and assisted with validation and resources. S.B.R., N.R., and A.S.P. engaged in funding acquisition.

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