

# Christian Education Strategy through Nationalistic Theogogy to Reach Multicultural Society

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## Abstract

This article focuses on nationalistic theogogy, which aims to strengthen the faith of religious believers based on a national perspective. It ensures that the Christian faith is understood and lived within a national context without losing its identity in Christ. Nationalistic theogogy is defined as a strategy in Christian religious education aimed at addressing the needs of building a peaceful national insight and nurturing diversity in Indonesian society. It emphasises the importance of intercultural interaction to foster collaboration and understanding among cultural groups in the digital era. Nationalistic theogogy strives to build a peaceful national perspective while preserving diversity within a nationalistic context and also emphasises the development of critical, analytical, and reflective thinking among students in Christian Education to enhance intellectual virtues. It aims to instil faith-based moral values by shaping good character and strong morals based on biblical teachings. Nationalistic theogogy promotes a humanistic perspective based on biblical principles, teaching fair, civilised, and humanitarian values. The approach acknowledges and respects the diversity of religions, cultures, and ethnicities within a multicultural society, ensuring the preservation of the Christian faith's identity while embracing diversity.

**Keywords:** nationalistic theogogy, Christian Religious Education, multicultural society

## 1. Introduction

The era of disruption has had a significant impact on a globalized and multicultural society. The rapid development of technology and the social changes that have occurred have changed the way people interact, work and live as a whole. Access to information from different countries and cultures is wide open, making the exchange of knowledge and intercultural understanding easier (Bani et al., 2023). This not only opens up space for collaboration in solving common problems, but also carries the risk of polarization and potential intercultural conflict due to differences in values<sup>3</sup>, beliefs and ways of looking at the world<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Culture refers to the patterns of behavior, beliefs, values, traditions, and knowledge that are possessed and inherited by a group of people. Brigitte Kahl, "Human Culture and the Integrity of Creation" dalam *The Ecumenical Review*. 1987. 39(2), 133.

<sup>4</sup> Human culture contains ethos and worldviews that then shape the essence of human life itself. Robert W. Pazmino, *Fondasi Pendidikan Kristen*. Bandung: STT Bandung dan Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia. 2012, 232-233.

The vulnerability of multicultural societies in the era of disruption has led to the need for a strategy to answer the needs of building a peaceful national insight and maintaining diversity as a unique characteristic of the Indonesian nation. Disruption initiated the birth of a new business model with a more innovative strategy. The idea is contained in a construction of a nationalistic theological model that departs from the awareness of the importance of the interaction of Christian Education in reaching multicultural communities living in the digital era (Kolibu, 2023).

This article tries to elaborate nationalistic theology as a Christian Education strategy in reaching out to multicultural communities using qualitative methods with a descriptive approach. The activity of “reaching out” implies that in the digital era; one side opens up wide access to the flow of information from and to multicultural communities, but at the same time, the digital world provides its own challenges that make multicultural communities increasingly difficult to reach because trends in the real world and the virtual world have a wide spectrum of dynamics; related to differences in values and beliefs, gaps in access and dissemination of information, the emergence of stereotypes and prejudices and diverse perspectives on how to resolve conflicts (Bani et al., 2023).

## 2. Methodology

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## 3. Methodology

The composition method of this article is descriptive qualitative, where the approach to literature study is carried out to obtain data. Qualitative data collection was carried out by reviewing ideas and findings based on the literature and the initial stages related to data analysis. Next, the author read and studied their reference book first, then examined and conducted analysis to represent theoretical information in relation

with the topic; relevant references to describe nationalistic theology and multicultural society in relation to practice Christian Education. Finally, the result of the analysis were linked and adapted to the context of the topic that shall be discussed.

#### 4. Discussion

##### **Nationalistic Theology as an Interdisciplinary Interaction Model**

This concept has connection points with the idea of public religious pedagogy which is a hybrid model of public theology with religious pedagogy. The concept connects public theology, social theory and educational theory. It is concerned with the relationship between public theology and education, which is an often neglected area of research in theology as well as educational theory and religious pedagogy (Pirner, 2017). In the German context, Pirner sees this idea emerging as a result of the rediscovery and reassessment of the political dimension of public religious education. It has clear analogies with public theology and has the potential to become a new paradigm in the academic discipline of religious pedagogy. Systematically, Pirner hypothesizes that the philosophical discourse on the question “how citizens who remain divided on religious doctrine, philosophy, and morals can still maintain a just and stable democratic society” corresponds to the discourse in education. In this regard, the social theories of John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas are used by Pirner as a framework to connect public theology and (religious) education. Pirner underlines Rawls' social theory that puts forward the concept of justice as fair equality in society. Rawls emphasizes the importance of principles of justice that govern the fair distribution of resources and opportunities. He also proposes principles of justice: *first*, the principle of basic equality that guarantees the basic rights of every individual; *second*, the principle of diversity that takes into account the benefits of the least advantaged in society. Rawls' social theory also emphasizes the importance of social agreement and consensus in achieving justice in society. Pirner also highlights Habermas' idea of the communicative concept in his social theory. Habermas emphasizes the importance of dialogue and rational communication in achieving a just social agreement and that a pluralistic democratic society should be based on a more substantial consensus rather than a mere “modus vivendi”<sup>5</sup>. Habermas emphasizes the importance of education and learning in the process of achieving deeper social consensus, he also proposes a complementary learning process between religiously diverse and non-religious citizens. Based on these two social theories, Pirner developed the idea of public religious pedagogy, which refers to the effort to understand and integrate the public dimension in religious education, and connect it with public theology and social theory.

##### **Nationalistic Theology Gains Relevance of Christian Values in the Age of Disruption**

Returning to nationalistic theology, this hybrid model has several aspects. The first aspect is intellectual nobility, which is the recognition of one's own limited knowledge and abilities and the willingness to learn from others. Furthermore, honest and credible morality as a fruit of solid faith, the perspective of synergy between education and science with religion (theology). Awareness of the gap between exclusive faith and inclusive pedagogical nuances where both need to be bridged. Efforts to bridge the gap require God to work according to what pleases Him (Kolibu, 2023).

These various aspects contain relevant Christian values that can be considered as alternative solutions to the potential dangers facing Christianity in the era of disruption (Bani et al., 2023). According to Bani,

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<sup>5</sup> Pirner defines it as a form of consensus that attempts to achieve cooperation and coexistence in situations where there is no deeper or comprehensive agreement on fundamental principles. The term is often used in political and social contexts to describe practical ways to maintain peace and stability among different groups.

these potential dangers include several things. *First*, the negative influence of technological development. The disruption era is characterized by rapid technological advances, such as the internet and social media; although technology can be used to spread religious teachings and expand the reach of the church, it also brings potential dangers. This can be seen from the spread of incorrect or harmful information, which can affect Christian beliefs and practices. *Second*, the influence of secular culture. The era of disruption is characterized by rapid cultural change. Secular culture that emphasizes individualism, materialism, and hedonism can affect Christian values and practices. Christians may be faced with temptation and even pressure to follow cultural trends that are contrary to the teachings of the Christian faith. *Third*, the challenge of maintaining a pure faith. Social, economic and political changes in an era of disruption can create uncertainty and anxiety. This can test the faith and loyalty of Christians. *Fourth*, changes in family life. The era of disruption brings changes in family dynamics. Lifestyle changes, jobs that require high mobility, and the influence of different cultures can affect family stability and the Christian values taught in the family. *Fifth*, challenges in church ministry. Churches are also faced with challenges in delivering religious teachings and retaining congregation members in the era of disruption. Changes in ways of worship, rapid access to information, and challenges in delivering relevant messages can become obstacles in church ministry.

The era of disruption, which is characterized by a culture of digital life, also contains positive potential for Christianity (Bani et al., 2023). The internet and digital technologies give Christians wide access to religious resources, such as live-streamed messages, podcasts, and worship services. This allows Christians to stay connected with their congregations and develop their faith. According to Bani, the development of technology has also affected the way religion is learned. Christians can use technology to learn religion with new and innovative methods. For example, the use of digital media in religious learning can help Christians to better understand and develop their faith. The presence of digital media provides greater opportunities for Christianity to spread religious teachings to billions of people in a relatively quick time. Christians can use digital media to invite others to consider the meaning and purpose of life and provide opportunities for them to better learn the Christian faith.

### **Nationalistic Theology as the Crystallization of Awareness of God's Relational Love**

National identity does not only need a foundation at the personal level, but also takes root in the smallest community that forms society, namely the family through the relationship between parents as educators and children as students. This micro-level pattern is a miniature of the universal pattern, namely the relationship between God who loves His creation. In this regard, the Jewish view contributes to the realization of theology-pedagogy that involves the image of God as teacher and parent (Alexander, 2001). In the Jewish tradition, God is seen as the ultimate role model who teaches values and moral norms to his people. God as teacher and parent provides teaching, nurturing, and guidance to his people, not by using power, but with love and persuasiveness.

Alexander identifies that the Jewish view emphasizes that the authority of religious and educational leaders should be based on moral purpose, not on the use of power. In Jewish theology, the relationship between teacher and student is a dialogical one, where questions are encouraged, challenges accepted, and discovery made possible. Students are taught to seek and find their best selves within the moral and communal framework provided by God's Torah. He also saw that this approach emphasized the importance of guidance, nurture, and persuasion in religious education. God as teacher and parent provides

a fallible<sup>6</sup> example, so that His disciples can become independent learners and understand God's teachings with a conscience that has moral authority. Jewish education implements coercive power with moral authority in a different way. In the Jewish context, moral authority is not coercive power, but rather an ongoing moral relationship between God and the people of Israel. God does not force His people to obey His commandments, but chooses to give them the freedom to choose and take responsibility for their actions.

This means that in Jewish education, moral authority lies in the relationship established between teacher and student. Jewish teachers are not authorities who force students to obey, but they become moral authorities by setting a good example and inspiring students to follow the moral teachings. Jewish education emphasizes the importance of building a strong moral relationship between teacher and student, where students are given the freedom to choose and take responsibility for their own actions. Alexander's idea of the theology of teaching says that teaching is a sacred act and the teacher of divine wisdom is a revered figure. A *rabbi* represents God symbolically by imitating divine behavior. A *rabbi* pedagogically guides the learner to understand and embrace divine teachings. Alexander also argued that learning Torah is a form of worship to God and following Torah study is a form of action to worship the Divine. In this view, God is the ultimate teacher who teaches about the good life, and the appropriate response is to seek to find the best self within the moral and communal framework provided by God's Torah.

The nationalistic theology approach departs from the honesty of recognizing human limitations and teaching dependence on God. The importance of interpersonal communication skills is also emphasized in this approach. Students should be taught to communicate well and respect the opinions of others, thus creating constructive dialogue and mutual understanding in a multicultural society (Kolibu, 2023). This ideal nationalistic theology approach is expected to contribute to building a peaceful national insight and preserving diversity in a nationalistic context in Indonesia.

### **Implications of the Application of Nationalistic Theology in the Context of Christian Education in Indonesia**

The idea of an ideal nationalistic theological approach in the Indonesian context is one that combines multicultural theology and pedagogy that complement each other in appreciating cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity in a multicultural society (Kolibu, 2023). This approach aims to build a peaceful national outlook and preserve diversity in a nationalistic context. This nationalistic theology approach includes several important aspects. *First*, this approach emphasizes intellectual virtues, where Christian Education need to encourage the development of critical, analytical, and reflective thinking in students. *Second*, this approach emphasizes morality rooted in faith, where Christian Education has the task of shaping good character and strong morals based on biblical teachings. In addition, this approach also promotes Bible-based humanism, where Christian Education is tasked with teaching human values that are just, civilized, and humane. This approach should also be inclusive, recognizing and respecting religious, cultural and ethnic diversity in a multicultural society. In this case, there should be a guarantee of responsible freedom in expressing diverse views of thought, especially in the context of a multicultural society in Indonesia. Educators can lead by example in sharing their beliefs and perspectives in a way that leads to reflection and discussion from other students and educators, rather than reinforcing divisions and polarization. In order to create an inclusive classroom environment, it is important to recognize and respect

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<sup>6</sup> Alexander clearly explains that in the Jewish tradition, God is seen as an entity that is constantly learning and teaching. God sometimes regrets and then changes His decisions. This concept shows that even God as a moral example admits mistakes and can change his mind.

the diversity of students. By accepting diversity, honing empathy for all, and practicing humility in the sincerity of accepting differences, harmony and unity can be achieved.

Taking into account Hosek's findings and suggestions, the application of nationalistic theology in the Indonesian context in the future needs to pay full attention to the development of nationalistic insight. The nationalistic theological approach can help build a strong nationalistic insight in a pluralistic Indonesian society that recognizes and appreciates the diversity of cultures, ethnicities and religions in Indonesia's multicultural society. This can help strengthen interfaith tolerance<sup>7</sup> and promote unity in diversity. Finally, attention needs to be focused on efforts to strengthen the faith of religious communities on a national basis. A nationalistic theology approach has great potential to help strengthen the faith of national-based religious communities, where the Christian faith is understood and lived out in a national context without losing one's identity as a follower of Jesus Christ. This can strengthen the relationship between religion and national identity. At the same time, it is necessary to be careful in anticipating things that have the potential to hinder and even stop Christian Education in reaching out to multicultural communities in Indonesia.<sup>8</sup> The nationalistic theology approach, if it does not depart from the foundation of true faith, has the potential to be exclusive in the sense that it excludes and even minimizes other religious or cultural groups. If not implemented with caution, this approach can widen the separation and potential for horizontal conflict between groups.

Similarly, it is necessary to be aware of the potential for the formation of a narrow understanding of nationalism. There is a risk that the nationalistic theological approach could be trapped in a narrow nationalism that downplays the role and contribution of other religious or cultural groups, especially in relations between majority and minority groups. This can hinder dialog and cooperation between groups in society. So, the nationalistic theological approach needs to face the challenge of accommodating this diversity and ensuring that Christian Religious Education takes place in inclusiveness, which is, having the ability to recognize diversity without losing the characteristics and foundations of Christian faith.

## 5. Conclusion

The era of disruption brings significant changes to Christian Education in a multicultural society. Technological and social changes have altered the way society interacts and lives as a whole. In this context, there is a need for Christian Education strategies that can reach out to multicultural societies. One of the proposed strategies is nationalistic theology, which recognizes the importance of religious interaction through the practice of Christian Education in multicultural contexts and the digital age. Nationalistic theology in Christian Education is an approach that integrates theological and pedagogical aspects. This approach is based on theological principles or religious beliefs, but also pays attention to effective learning methods in teaching nationalism. Nationalistic theology emphasizes the importance of conscience-sensitive character building through the practice of Christian Education. This approach aims to form individuals who are moved to realize positive things as a just and civilized humanity. Nationalistic

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<sup>7</sup> There is a view that tolerance consists of several layers. The outermost layer is called "social tolerance" while the innermost layer is "religious tolerance". For more details, see Frets Keriapy & Talizaro Tafonao, "Pela Gandong from the Perspective of Christian Education: An Attempt in Flourishing the Tolerance in Maluku Post-Conflict" dalam *Sanctum Domine: Jurnal Teologi*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2023), 203-214.

<sup>8</sup> Since the pioneering of Christian Religious Education practice in Indonesia, there has been an awareness that Indonesia has a social context that has a diversity of professions, structures, demographics and cultures. The idea of reaching out to Indonesia's multicultural society has become the address of the field of church work. For more details, see Robert R. Boehlke, *Sejarah Perkembangan Pikiran dan Praktek Pendidikan Agama Kristen*. Dari Yohanes Amos Comenius sampai Perkembangan PAK di Indonesia. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia. 2015, 780-782.

theology recognizes and appreciates cultural, ethnic and religious diversity in a multicultural society. This approach aims to build a peaceful national outlook and preserve diversity in a nationalistic context through the practice of Christian education. As such, nationalistic theology encourages constructive dialog and mutual understanding between groups in society.

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