



Batak Christian Protestant Church's View Concerning Ecology

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Abstract:

This paper examines a discussion about ecology focus on Batak Christian Protestant Church's view and action. The study's reason is based on what the church said about ecological problems in their faith declaration. Furthermore, looking Batak Christian Protestant Church (HKBP) litigates connected to ecological action case in Indonesia. Methodology in this research is literary, looking at the book, internet, and faith confession of the HKBP. Gathering the data and then analyze is the approach used to discuss the issue. This study traced that the HKBP has mentioned ecology in their faith confession. In their view, HKBP argues that God created man in his residence and place of work in this world (Gen. 2:5-15). Therefore, they oppose any environmentally damaging activities, such as burning and cutting down trees in the forest or wilderness (Deuteronomy 5: 20; 19-20). This creed is based on the Word of God as recorded in the scriptures. They also have been activated to protect nature, for example: develop livestock waste into alternative energy (biogas); planting trees in Peak Dolok, Balige North Sumatera; statings local wisdom. Christianity realizes that ecology issues are also part of their problems. What has been done by the HKBP be a positive thing. This action is a good activity for Christianity in Indonesia. Even though we cannot deny the ecology problem is our common problem.

Keyword: *Action, Batak Christian Protestant Church's view, creed (faith confession), Ecology*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking about ecology is not a new thing in Christianity. Already academicians expressed their views on that field personally or by interpretation of the scripture. As Lynn White in *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis* says, Christianity is responsible for the ecological crisis. It is happening because Christianity interprets Genesis 1:28 as the right to conquer and exploit the earth. "...God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." (White, 1997, p. 50). White states that this consideration is associated with the human attitude towards the environment life. Consequently, the ecological crisis is part of Christianity's duty.

Additionally, Mark Liederbach, in *True North: Christ, the Gospel and Creation Care*, said that man must conquer the earth with love because of God is a God who loves His creation, creating humans by His's image (Liederbach, 2012, 70). This word must be interpreted as a command to love, manage human nature-well, and see the human not to destroy nature. Genesis' focus is God as the Creator, creating from disorder to order. Therefore, the word should not construct to justify exploitation, disorder.

Furthermore, there is the sabbatical year in Christian theology on interpreting scripture texts (Leviticus 25:1-5 and Exodus 23:10-11). Sabbath year is another name for the seventh year. Sabbath means rest. In the sabbatical year, every person who owed (not paid) should be free from debt. Slaves should be free. However, before being released, equip slave masters to live in freedom (Deuteronomy 5:14). This year, the soil should also feel the Sabbath. Sabbath year marks the close relationship with the land of God. The land is owned by God and given as a gift to humans (Paterson, 1994, p. 328). Under this regulation, the ground should plant during

the six years. However, in the seventh year, the land shall rest. The land lifted to be free. Planting, pruning, and harvesting crops for storage are forbidden. In the seventh year, the land intended for the poor and the preservation of the land. The regulations stipulated that: 1) Israel watched his neighbor's welfare and 2) nature preserve (Scheef, 1960, p. 25).

Based on the above discussion, it clarifies that Christianity is responsible for the ecological crisis as we have responded to love earth in order, as we also should break in Sabbath, which means the rest in the seventh year, the land shall rest. The interpretation of scripture implies that God notices about land conservation and the environment from a long time ago since He creates all things, nothing new in Christianity preserving nature and ecology. The new thing is only the problem of nature due to the human activity itself, ecology problem!

Ecology's problem is not a partial case, which occurs only in one place, without connection. As David Swinbanks writes in "*Forest fires cause pollution in Asia,*" forest fires cause pollution crisis in Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia. Those places got the pollution from Indonesia. 70% of primary fires are raging out of Indonesian control, especially in Sumatera and Kalimantan. This crisis happens in developed industrial countries and in developing and tropical countries, Indonesia. Furthermore, in 2013 this case happens again, the source of smoke from Sumatera. This problem of pollution, ecology is part of church issue.

Does the above discussion bring to question the response of the church seeing the condition of nature? Is the church says anything to see the defective nature? In this paper, the writer will see HKBP's view. Therefore, this paper focuses on the analysis of faith confession of the environment. The confession analyzed from is HKBP. Faith confession is the basis used in determining the attitude of the church. The rules serve as guidelines both

for the congregation and the church.

DISCUSSION

Batak Christian Protestant Church

HKBP is a traditional church from North Sumatra which dominated by Batak Toba tribe. Though based on tribal church, the church is not close; they are open to all people who believe in God, Jesus Christ. The center of official office HKBP headquartered in Pearaja, North Tapanuli, North Sumatra, led by *Ephorus, Ompung, Ompui*, equal to a bishop.

HKBP legally exist on October 07, 1861 (HKBP, 2002, p. 3), grew out of mission-Gessellschaft Rheinische Missions (RMG) from Germany. This church is the largest Protestant Christian Church in South East and the third-largest religious organization after Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah in Indonesia, with around 4.5 million people worldwide, including in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Los Angeles, New York.

Hkbp's View Concerning Ecology

The church's view concerning ecology is written in the creed as the church's rules and regulations. Stated there as a confession because faith should be expressed by attitude. For a church synod, it is crucial to reject the false teachings, contrary to Christian teaching (HKBP, 1951, p 30). Creed-owned HKBP is not a new doctrine, as the reformed church (Lutheran), HKBP adopts the previous teaching. Renewing the following teachings of the changing times is the way to solve the problem. For this reason, the confession is following the challenges of the times.

HKBP creed is essentially unchanged. The change occurs following the development of the time. Adapting to the circumstances in which it grows, first published in 1951, second published in 1996. Both of these rules are still there to this day. The second creed is an "update" of

the old one. The update is not replacing the previous one, but the complement, appropriate complement with the growing problem.

In terms of its content, faith confession in 1951 does not discuss the recognition of ecology and the environment. The faith confession of 1951 is more concerned about the teaching, doctrine, church, and community. It is visible from all chapters in the rules that exist in 1951. Confession of Faith of 1951 consists of 18 chapters. The article covers;

- 1) About God
- 2) About God The Almighty
- 3) Work Personality of the Father
- 4) On the Word of God
- 5) About Sin
- 6) About Sin Heritage
- 7) About deliverance Sin
- 8) On the Church
- 9) About Waiter Waitress Church
- 10) About the Sacraments
- 11) About Tata Church
- 12) About the Government
- 13) On Sunday
- 14) About Food
- 15) Faith and Good Works
- 16) Warning People About Death
- 17) On Judgment
- 18) On penalty on the Day of Judgment (HKBP, 1951, p. 29 - 47).

The series of confessional articles in 1951 shows that the problem of ecology is not discussed. Church only discusses doctrine and teaching. Church-related creeds convey: what is God, the Trinity, sin, etc. Furthermore, the verses talk about the church, such as Church's order, church, etc. Furthermore, the creed also regulates society and government. Of all the chapters, the church still does not discuss ecology. The church only speaks about the church and the community and state. The confession focuses on the teachings of the church. The environment's topic is not "appear" as a problem in the profession of faith in 1951.

The following is a confession of faith in 1996, which is addition issues, different from 1951 Confession, in 1996 consists of 17 chapters. The chapters are:

- 1) About God
- 2) God's Word
- 3) People
- 4) People
- 5) Culture and Environment
- 6) Salvation
- 7) Church
- 8) Sacraments
- 9) Assembly Church
- 10) Church order
- 11) Sunday
- 12) Deeds and Faith
- 13) About Government
- 14) Food
- 15) Warning of the deceased
- 16) Coming of the Lord
- 17) About Angels (HKBP, 1996, p. 75-100).

In terms of content, the profession of faith in 1996 is in contrast to earlier recognition, 1951. The difference is clear; there is a discussion about ecology and the environment located in part five, “5) *Culture and Environment*”. That section describes the attitude of the church associated with the culture and the environment. In this article, the church gives its views and attitudes to keep nature.

This article provides a view—the view directed against God's creation. God is the universe's creation. Humans must maintain nature. The following explanations are:

*Article 5 of Culture and Environment
We Believe and Witness:*

1. *God created man with a place of residence and place of work in this world (Gen. 2:5-15). He who has everything, who gives life to all He created. Place where people work is the land, sea, and sky/space. God gives man the power to nourish the world with full responsibility. He also gave the language, musical instruments, art, and knowledge to man as a human tool and rules for praise the God (Him) and as a means to maintain and beautify the friendship between men that, through culture, the greater the kingdom of God. However, the culture that mixed paganism and contrary to the Word of God must reject.*

2. *Jesus Christ is the work of free people, all creation, and also the world (Col. 1:15-20, Romans 8: 19-23)*

With this:

We witnessed the man's responsibility to preserve all of God's creation so that people can work, healthy, and prosperous (Psalm 8: 4-10). We oppose any environmentally damaging activities, such as burning and cutting down trees in the forest or wilderness (Deuteronomy 5: 20; 19-20). We oppose any efforts that pollute water and air; well water contains toxic waste from factories because we do not care about sewage and air pollution, drinking water. Damage to the human respiratory (pollution / environmental pollution), compare Psalm 104: 1-23, Revelation 22: 1-2).

The description of the contents of chapter five shows that the HKBP against environmental destruction. Church said that they oppose any environmentally damaging activities, such as burning and cutting down trees in the forest or wilderness. The church opposes any effort to pollute the

environment, water, and air. Church opposes environmental pollution due to the waste plant, environmental pollution that causes pollution, environmental pollution, drinking water, and breathing.

The given statement is not without foundation. The basis is the Bible. The church bases its understanding that God creates man with the place where he lives and works in this world (Genesis 2:5-15). He who has everything gives life to all He creates. Is it a place where people work the land, sea, and sky, space! God gives man the power to nourish the world with full responsibility. Therefore, human responsibility is to maintain the world, not destroying it. The church believes that Jesus Christ is the liberator of man, all creatures, and this world (Colossians. 1:15-20, Romans 8: 19-23). All of the creations belong to God to be protected and preserved.

Confession of Faith of 1951, yet not discussing the ecology and environmental issues, does not mean that the church is not discussing the future environment. It happens because, at that time, the natural problem has not become a significant issue. At that time, environmental issues are not as current. In the future, environmental issues become a problem to be solved. Therefore, keep abreast of current issues in the world, the church makes confession more precise. Furthermore, the profession of faith in 1996 expressed his attitude see environmental problems.

From the description of the profession of faith in 1996 is seen what response the church. There is a church response to the problem of ecology and the environment. Batak Christian Protestant Church states that they refuse to harm the environment. The church explains what it means by environmental damage. Damaging to the environment is the action that causes pollution, both air and water. They are opposed to damage environmental activities, burning and cutting down a tree in the woods or wilderness.

Hkbp's Action Concerning Ecology

In this paper, we only deliberate a few activities relate to the environment as we know that HKBP is widespread in many areas, urban and countryside. It needs more research if we want to collect comprehensive data from all churches. This section, which can be delivered, is an activity carried out by the leaders who tend to be urban, which is 1). HKBP develops livestock waste into alternative energy biogas. 2). HKBP planting trees. 3). HKBP planting pine trees in Dolok, Balige. 4). HKBP states local wisdom.

Hkbp Develop Livestock Waste Into Alternative Energy (Biogas)

HKBP develops livestock waste into alternative energy (biogas), anticipating the energy crisis. To empower citizens and perform a prophetic voice for nature and people, the HKBP ranch training and sustainable animal waste utilization into alternative energy. This training is organized by the Community Development Bureau of the Batak Christian Protestant Church for four days. The activities are held at Panti Karya Hehata, Sintong Marnipi district Toba Samosir song Boti North Sumatra.

This activity aims to encourage residents of HKBP to bring good news. Bringing the message of salvation to the earth: Earth Crisis, the crisis caused by people who are not responsible. People are just taking advantage. People do not think about the preservation of nature created by God.

Ephorus of Batak Christian Protestant Church (2012-2016), Rev William Simarmata, says that God created the earth. It was good (Gen. 1:31) and no defects. "...*God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth days*". The earth that created full potential humans is mandated to maintain and care for the earth (environment [ecology]).

Hkb Planting Trees In Serpong

General Secretary of HKBP (2012-2016) Rev. Ramlan Hutahaeen plants mango trees in the churchyard HKBP Serpong. This is one church in Jakarta, District 21. This planting symbolizes protestant participation in the recovery of HKBP integrity of God's creation. This action is a green initiative. There are several types of trees planted: jackfruit, guava, durian, and mango. There, the leader of HKBP states that we plant trees because the Christian life must be like the tree. The tree gives fruit to the surrounding.

Hutahaeen hopes that many churches are planting trees. Planting trees as much as possible is good. If planting a tree can be used as motion or even tradition, then the impact will be huge. Indonesian will come back green, the name of the Lord will glorify.

Hkbp Planting Pine Trees In Peak Dolok, Balige

One of the HKBP congregations in the Church of Menteng, located in Central Jakarta, conducts tree planting activities in peak Dolok Please Balige. They plant 450 pine trees, trees planted in an area of half a hectare. The tree planting is part of the diaconal activities. Planting trees also deepen the Batak Toba language acquisition through a natural approach for the Protestant Church's citizens in Menteng.

The examples above show that HKBP is to preserve the environment. It is carried out based on good. The basis is of the word of God. God creates the universe, and humans are given the right and responsibility to take care of. Humans are not given the right to destroy but to master nature. Mastering for the goodness of nature, man, and God is the will of God.

Hkbp States Local Wisdom

In the Safe Lake Toba & Eco Care seminar, held by the HKBP Marturia

Department at the Pendopo of the Tobasa Regent's Office, Balige, Tobasa. HKBP Secretary General (*Sekjen 2016-2020*) Pdt. David Farel Sibuea, said that Batak local wisdom is precious, and HKBP must explore it. HKBP carries out the efforts to restore the Kawasan Danau Toba's ecosystem through an ecological-based church theology program. The reconstruction was built by exploring the values of local wisdom.

This shows clearly that the existence of HKBP as a church is very open in ecology. The church is open to adapting local cultural values that can be used in preserving the environment. Local culture can be applied in protecting the environment, as HKBP is a church based on culture, namely Batak culture.

CONCLUSION

HKBP is acted in preserving the environment triggered by their faith supported by an attitude written at *Confession of Faith* concerning ecology. The creed says that the church refuses to harm the environment. In action, the church has action in preserving the environment. They plant trees and give teachings to preserve the environment. What the church says about ecology issues is to act against environmental damage. Church refuses environmentally damaging actions. Not only banned, but the church is also taking action. Church invites people to join the tree planting. Christians should take care of nature. Christians should plant trees and live like a tree that gives fruit to others.

After analyzing the creed and HKBP action regarding the environment, we can conclude that HKBP is concerned about the environment. This action has positive effects on the world and human beings. Humans will be aware that the environment to be maintained. An expected small action like this brings a significant impact on human life. We hope all the churches in Indonesia can take this action.

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