



Ethical Attitude of the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera towards the 2024 Political Year in North Halmahera

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Abstract: This research uses a qualitative method with a descriptive analysis approach. The purpose of this research is to determine the ethical attitude of the Church to prevent the impact of differences in elections in political moments and to find out whether the church can be involved in practical politics or not. Based on the research results, the process of socialization to the congregation in order to provide a good understanding of politics has been conducted for a long time. However, there are some problems such as this socialization cannot be performed to all GMIH congregations in North Maluku. The other results of the research, as at the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera, show that the congregation is not involved in practical politics but the Church is present to provide understanding to all congregations about good politics and invite them to give their rights (votes), both to elect and be elected in the general elections (Pemilu) or in the regional elections (Pemilukada) in 2024.

Keywords: Church, Ethical Attitude, Politics

1. Introduction

2024 is a political year. All Indonesian citizens will be faced with 2 important moments, namely: the General Election (Pemilu) and the regional head election (Pilkada). This will of course involve all elements of society, including the church. Usually before this moment, the issue that is hotly discussed among Christians or congregations is about the church's involvement and attitude in politics. Can the church be political? What is the correct attitude of the church towards politics? Can a church leader (Pastor) run for office? These questions seem to want to separate church and politics. Politics is not the church's business. The church should not be involved in politics. In general, this understanding develops in the lives of congregation members. The church as an organization is aware of its duties and calling in the world. The church is also part of politics, which exists not to pursue power or certain political and economic interests, but is guided by a biblical vision of society and healthy political ways, the church can contribute to offering a better concept. Haris Jo explained that the church should not get involved in practical politics. Not because politics is dirty and the church is holy, but to maintain the neutrality and witness of the church which must provide a prophetic voice for parties involved in politics. (Putra et al. 2023)

Part of the Church's task is to provide understanding to Church members about the importance of politics in the state to achieve social welfare (shalom) through the political realm. (Rohi 2017) The existence of politics in Christianity is not included in the scope of church services, because the church is a spiritual institution that seeks to educate its citizens to live according to Biblical truth. (Arifianto 2023) Zakaria J. Ngelow in his writing about the role of the church in politics in Indonesia explains that the church is called to carry out transformations in the lifestyle of individuals and society. The church can function in politics not to play power politics, but rather the church plays an

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important role in building politics that is moral and dignified so that it can build a better Indonesia. (Ngelow 2014) In politics and law, the church needs to take a positive, critical and creative stance. The explanation of what is meant by positive here is how the church continues to view politics as a place for serving God, and continues to think positively and continues to contribute in accordance with the Christian Faith. Critical means not hesitating to provide input to the leader if mistakes occur that violate existing rules. Fransiska Ni Nyoman, "Church Entities in Politics in Indonesia (Review of Christian Ethics)," *Voice of Wesley: Scientific Journal of Music and Religion* 2, no. 1 (2019). Simamora in his writing emphasized that the church plays a very important role, as citizens in overseeing the wheels of government, where the church must be present if needed to provide advice if the government in running its government is deemed to deviate from the rules that have been legally established. Adolf Bastian Simamora, "Politics According to the Bible and Its Implications for Gereja's Role in the Political Vortex in Indonesia," *Jvow Vol 2 No 1 2*, no. 1 (2018).

In his book *Saut Sirait* it is explained that etymologically politics comes from the Greek word *polis* which means "city" or "an association". Departing from this definition of *polis*, the word *politia* was formed which is defined as: "State, citizens, welfare or a good way of life. Septian Tri Cahyono, "Church and Socio-Political Mandate," *KHATULISTIWA: Journal of Theological Education* 1, no. 1 (2023): 39. Basically, politics is a process to achieve the common good. Alter I Wowor, "Theology and Political Ethics in the Church in the Post-Modern Era," *BIA': Journal of Theology and Contextual Christian Education* 1, no. 1 (2018): 112–123. Alter's opinion explains that politics is a means of accommodating the interests of many people. Politics is also an integral part of the tasks that God has entrusted to humans, both individually and collectively. The definition of politics is all decisions made to improve the welfare of society. The aim of politics is in the interests of society/citizens and for goodness and justice. Djoys Anake Rantung, "Christian Religious Education and Politics in the Life of a Pluralistic Society in Indonesia," *Jurnal Shanana* 1, no. 2 (2017): 58–73. Politics is also defined as activities related to the control of decision making in society in certain areas where control is supported through instruments that are authoritative (legally authorized) and coercive (forceful in nature). Seta Basri, *Introduction to Political Science*, ed. Ika Yuliana K, 1st ed. (Jogjakarta: Indie Book Corner, 2011). Politics is also defined by Hutahean as how to make policies for and in the interests of many people. Hasahatan Hutahean, "MELO: Journal of the Study of Religions," *MELO: Journal of the Study of Religions* 1, no. 1 (2021): 1–17. This is in line with the principle of the church, namely as salt and light in the midst of the world. This basis is the attitude and ministry of the church. The purpose of writing this article is to discuss the ethical stance of the church to prevent the impact of voting differences in political moments and whether the church can get involved in practical politics.

Previous studies in this research include research from Johan Andres Serhalawan with the title *Ethical and Political Attitudes of the Church in Welcoming the Political Year in Indonesia*. This research focuses on the ethical attitude of the church in the political field. Church and politics are not in conflict with each other, quite the opposite. The church is part of politics. Johan Andres Serhalawan, "The Ethical and Political Stance of the Church Welcoming the Political Year in Indonesia," *Scientific Journal of Tangkole XV*, no. 1 (2018): 76–95. The church needs to behave ethically in the political arena. Previous research was also from Alter I. Wowor with the title *Theology and Political Ethics in the Church in the Post-Modern Era*, this research discusses the reality of democracy in Indonesia in the post-modern era. Democracy, which should aim to answer the interests of the people, is no longer recognized and becomes a priority, what is prioritized is only the subjective interests of certain individuals or associations. Thus, the church which is also part of the community of life needs to take an ethical stance. The church's ethical attitude is to fight for the interests of the people holistically, not individually. The church

becomes a communicative means, capable of communicating to the State or Government because the presence of the church is believed to have an influence on political decision making and social change. Wowor, "Political Theology and Ethics in the Church in Post-Modern Times." This third previous research was from Alvary Exan Rerung & Juliati Attu with the title Church Attitude towards Political Participation and its Relevance for the church of Toraja Mamasa Jemat Sapankale, the aim of this research is to provide an understanding of the Church's attitude towards political participation which is good and correct, so that the church can actively express its prophetic voice by participating in politics (Rerung and Attu 2023). If we examine further, the first research shows the ethical attitude of the church in the political arena, in this case the church provides support for its citizens to support every political process and development, the church must stand up to fight for the interests of the people and there is no taking sides. Meanwhile, for the second research above, it can be concluded that the reality of democracy in the post-modern era requires the church to behave ethically. The ethical attitude of the church is seen in the role of the church as a communicative means that is able to fight for the interests of the people to the State or Government. Research on the third point focuses more on how the church can play an active role in providing an understanding of the church's attitude towards good and correct political participation in the congregation. This helps church members participate in political activities, so as not to cause problems of disharmony and even church splits. The three previous studies above do not discuss the ethical stance that churches must take to prevent the impact of electoral differences in political moments that lead to church divisions. This is the value of novelty in this study.

2. Materials and Methods

In this study, qualitative methods were used with a descriptive analysis approach. This is intended to understand the church's involvement in political moments and the church's ethical stance to prevent the impact of electoral differences among congregation members and see whether the church can get involved in practical politics at the political moment in North Halmahera. This research was carried out by interpreting and analyzing facts related to the involvement and ethical attitudes of churches in political moments in preventing the impact of electoral differences among congregation members. The data sources used in this research are primary data and secondary data. Primary data in the research was obtained through interviews with informants. In this research, informants were determined from the start of the research using the informant determination technique, namely purposive sampling. This purposive sampling technique was carried out with the aim of selecting informants who were truly relevant and competent with the research problem. (Bataona and Bajari 2017)

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 *This The Church's Ethical Attitude to Prevent the Impact of Electoral Differences in Political Moments*

As a good church member, you cannot be separated from political responsibility, namely being involved in voting and being elected at every moment of the democratic party, the aim of which is to build the future of the nation and state in a better direction. Aristotle stated that by nature humans are political animals, because politics in human life is an important thing. Human life cannot be separated from how every human being cannot live alone, but fellow humans need the help of other people to continue their lives. (Jebadu 2017) The word politics was simplified by Yohanes K. Susanta as a medium for fighting for love and realizing justice. The aim of politics itself, as stated by Susanta, is to fight for love and justice for others. (Apner 2022) In principle, politics is an art of how we should live together in a group and all the provisions are regulated in a state system. The word politics is defined as the art of making decisions by people who

have different interests, with the aim of taking a policy related to the future of many people. (Ming and Ming 2021) Hutahaeen also explained that politics is about making policies for and in the interests of many people. It is not much different from what Susanta stated above, that through politics we can make a good policy for the future of many people, the task of the church.

Based on the results of research in the field, it can be concluded that currently approaching the 2024 political moment, the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera has started to work on how to prevent the negative impacts that will occur. One of the activities that has been carried out in the congregation to anticipate this is by providing congregation members with a good understanding of politics at every opportunity for church activities. Another activity that has been carried out is through outreach activities to congregations throughout the GMIH area in North Maluku. Basically, politics is a process to achieve the common good. Politics is also an integral part of the tasks that God has entrusted to humans, both individually and collectively. (Wowor 2018) This is in line with the principle of the church which understands its presence within as salt and light in the midst of the world. This basis is the attitude and ministry of the church. In line with what Abu Bakar has stated, church and politics have the same responsibility and goal, namely for the good of the people. (Bakar and Wahyu 2022) Abu Bakar firmly explained that the Church cannot escape its social responsibilities, one of which is through an active role in the world of politics without showing partiality to certain individuals or certain groups. Politics has long been considered a taboo subject, so it needs to be avoided, but Paul in the Gospel of Romans 13:1-7 explains that people who believe in God should serve the world well, not stay away from it or destroy it when they experience problems. In terms of church services to its congregation, it is necessary to provide understanding and strengthening to the congregation, including providing an understanding of good politics so that as good church members they can understand their duties well. (Simamora 2018) Baghi explained that the church plays a very important role in the socio-political process for the benefit of many people. Baghi, also said that the church should not be outside the political vortex, because the church must be involved in every democratic process to realize every government policy that prioritizes the interests of many people. (Bakar and Wahyu 2022).

3.2 Can the Church Get Involved in Practical Politics?

The involvement of the church in politics is an interesting discussion in Indonesia. Every political moment, be it elections or regional elections, many members of the congregation question what attitude the church should take in every democratic party, be it elections or regional elections.

The question that often arises in congregations recently ahead of the 2024 political year is, can the Church be involved in every political moment in Indonesia? Based on the results of research at the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera, it can be explained that the Church is not involved in practical politics, but the church has an important role in providing a good understanding of politics to all members of the congregation and the Church directs the congregation to be able to give their voting rights to be able to elect leaders as new good. From these results it can be explained that the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera does not participate in politics, but the Church invites all congregations to be involved in voting and being elected in every political year in North Halmahera Regency. The state guarantees every citizen's right to vote and vote in every political moment. In accordance with the mandate of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia Article 1 paragraph (2) of 1945 confirms that "Sovereignty is in the hands of the people and is implemented according to the Constitution". (Scipto 2019) The emphasis in the Constitution is that the people are the ones who determine who will be the leaders of this country and region for the next five years. The task of the church is to provide pastoral guidance, be involved in the implementation of one life in carrying out

good politics, provide a sense of justice for all citizens and bring peace in the midst of the world.(Nyoman 2019) Not only this, the church is also open, dynamic, dialogical in every development situation that occurs in the congregation and society and can respond to all these things with a positive, critical, creative and realistic attitude. What is meant by positive here is how the church continues to view politics as a place for serving God, and continues to think positively and continues to contribute in accordance with the Christian faith. Critical means not hesitating to provide input to the leader if mistakes occur that violate existing rules. The Church is called to carry out transformations in individual human and societal patterns of life. The church can function in politics not to carry out power politics, but rather the church plays an important role in building politics that is moral and dignified so that it can build a better Indonesia.(Ngelow 2014) Oscar Cullman distinguishes between *politeia* and *politeuma*. *Politeia* means politics in the sense of taking power in a government system. And *polyteuma* itself is politics that emphasizes upholding the values of the kingdom of God in this world, for example: justice, truth, prosperity and creating a new world that elevates human dignity as the image and likeness of God. (Kej. 1:26-28). (Ming and Ming 2021) It is the duty and service of the Church that the church must uphold truth in the midst of political life, namely upholding justice and realizing love based on Biblical principles.(Nyoman 2019) So the politics carried out by the State should be directed and realized based on love for others and for God. The existence of the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera must create a form of real action in politics. We all know that politics is one part of the field of service that the church must serve. Daulay explained that there are still many church members, including those who are educated, even those who call themselves political, who do not yet understand to what extent and in what form the Church (as an institution) can be involved in State affairs. In fact, even though the Church is not a political organization, the Church is part of the *polis* (city) or State. In Jeremiah 29: 7, it is written; "Seek out the welfare of the city where I exile you, and pray for that city to God, for its welfare is your welfare." Gianto, "Servants of God and Practical Politics: A Theological-Ethical Study of the Vocation of Servants of God and Their Involvement in Practical Politics in the Indonesian Context," *Coram Mundo: Journal of Theology and Christian Religious Education* 3, no. 2 (2021): 59–64. From what Daulay put forward, it explains that Christians should not be allergic to politics, but must participate, that is, take part in the success of electing leaders democratically.

Simamora further emphasized in his writing that the church plays a very important role in overseeing the wheels of government. If the State in carrying out its duties deviates from the existing regulations, the church must be present to provide input to the government in accordance with the applicable regulations. Simamora in his concept explains that the Church is present to remind the State, if in running the government it is not in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and the 1945 Constitution. Simamora, "Politics According to the Bible and Its Implications for Gereja's Role in the Political Vortex in Indonesia."

4. Conclusion

From the research results, it can be concluded that long before the General Election and Regional Head Election in 2024, the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera has provided outreach to congregations to provide a good understanding of politics to congregations. However, the obstacle is that this socialization activity cannot yet be implemented to all members of GMIH in North Maluku. Other research results relate to whether churches can be involved in practical politics, the Evangelical Christian Church in Halmahera, is not involved in practical politics, but the Church is here to provide understanding to the entire congregation to provide a good understanding of politics, and

invites all congregations to give their rights well to vote and be elected in elections and local elections.

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