Dialectical Interaction Between Religion and Society: Weber and Niebuhr's Thought Analysis.

Marde Christian Stenly Mawikere[1], Sudiria Hura[2], Jean Calvin Riedel Mawikere[3], Daniella Beauty Melanesia Mawikere[4]
Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Manado[(1,2)] Universitas Sam Ratulangi Manado[(3)] Sekolah Menengah Pertama Santa Theresia Manado[(4)]
mardestenly@gmail.com[1]

Abstract

The interaction between religion and society has a significant impact on social, economic, and cultural development. This analysis focuses on the thoughts of Max Weber and Richard Niebuhr. Weber observed the Protestant ethic values, particularly among Calvinists, which influenced the emergence of modern capitalism. Conversely, Niebuhr investigated the complex interaction between Christ's teachings and the cultural reality of humanity influenced by sin. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with literature review as the main approach. With this approach, in-depth analysis can be conducted without field research. The results of the analysis are expected to provide a better understanding of the interaction between religion and society and its impact on social change. The conclusion emphasizes the importance of this understanding in improving social and cultural conditions within society. Practical recommendations and further research can be suggested based on the findings. This article not only contributes theoretically but also provides a foundation for real efforts in improving society through a better understanding of the interaction between religion and society.

Abstrak

Interaksi antara agama dan masyarakat memiliki dampak yang signifikan pada perkembangan sosial, ekonomi, dan budaya. Analisis ini memfokuskan pemikiran Max Weber dan Richard Niebuhr. Weber memperhatikan nilai-nilai etika Protestan, khususnya di kalangan Calvinis, yang memengaruhi munculnya kapitalisme modern. Sebaliknya, Niebuhr menyelidiki interaksi kompleks antara ajaran Kristus dan realitas kebudayaan manusia yang terpengaruh oleh dosa. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif dengan kajian pustaka sebagai pendekatan utama. Dengan pendekatan ini, analisis mendalam dapat dilakukan tanpa penelitian lapangan. Hasil analisis diharapkan memberikan pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang interaksi agama dan masyarakat serta dampaknya pada perubahan sosial. Kesimpulan menekankan pentingnya pemahaman ini dalam meningkatkan kondisi sosial dan budaya dalam masyarakat. Rekomendasi praktis dan penelitian lanjutan dapat disarankan berdasarkan temuan-temuan yang dihasilkan. Artikel ini tidak hanya berkontribusi secara teoretis, tetapi juga memberikan landasan bagi upaya nyata dalam memperbaiki masyarakat melalui pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang interaksi agama dan masyarakat.

INTRODUCTION

The interaction between religion and society has long been a central concern in the realm of social studies, given its profound impact on the social, economic, and cultural fabric of communities. Scholars such as Max Weber and Richard Niebuhr have played pivotal roles in advancing our comprehension of this intricate relationship. Weber's analysis delved into the correlation between Protestant ethics, particularly within Calvinism, and the emergence of modern capitalism, which has significantly shaped global transformations. Conversely, Niebuhr elucidated the intricate interplay between Christ's teachings and the realities of human culture, often marred by sin and frailty.

This study endeavors to meticulously examine the ideologies put forth by Weber and Niebuhr to unravel the dialectical interplay between religion and society. Emphasis will be placed on discerning how religious values mold the norms and principles governing communal life, amidst the multifaceted influences of social, political, and economic factors.

Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, this research will conduct an exhaustive and nuanced analysis of the intricate relationship between religion and society within a contemporary social milieu. The aim is to contribute significantly to our comprehension of the dynamics of religious and societal interactions, as well as their potential ramifications on broader social transformations. A comprehensive exploration of Weber and Niebuhr's seminal works will lay a robust groundwork for formulating recommendations and strategies aimed at enhancing societal and cultural conditions. Consequently, this article will scrutinize the phenomenon of dialectical interaction between religion and society with meticulous detail and depth, elucidating its pertinence within an ever-evolving modern society.

Subsequently, the study will delve deeper into the research methodologies employed and the findings gleaned, conducting a thorough analysis of their implications. This discussion will facilitate a deeper insight into the dynamics of religious and societal interactions, offering valuable perspectives on the ongoing landscape of social change.

In conclusion, this article will proffer pertinent interpretations of the research findings, augmenting our understanding of the intricate phenomenon surrounding the dialectic between religion and society, and laying the groundwork for further scholarly inquiry in this domain.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with literature review or literary study as the primary method of data collection. This methodology is selected to facilitate an extensive examination of the perspectives of Max Weber and Richard Niebuhr on the interplay between religion and society, eliminating the necessity for field research. Data will be derived from the analysis of texts, works, and literature authored by Weber and Niebuhr, along with supplementary literature pertinent to the research subject.

The process of literature selection is conducted meticulously, taking into account the relevance and accuracy of information essential for addressing the research inquiries. The selected literature encompasses the writings of Weber and Niebuhr, analytical discourses, and critiques exploring and interpreting their ideas. Additionally, supplementary sources such as journal articles, textbooks, and contemporary academic references will be utilized to enhance comprehension of relevant social and cultural contexts.

The data garnered from the literature review will undergo systematic analysis employing a descriptive framework. The analysis aims to discern primary themes, fundamental concepts, and emerging patterns within the discourses of Weber and Niebuhr concerning the nexus of religion and society. Subsequently, the analytical findings will be structured and presented comprehensively to elucidate a profound understanding of the dialectical rapport between religion and society or society and religion, as well as to propose practical applications and avenues for further research. Consequently, this methodological approach is anticipated to contribute significantly to the enrichment of our understanding of the intricate interplay between religion and society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Discourse on Religion Influencing Society According to Weber

Several studies have investigated the thesis presented by Max Weber regarding the correlation between Protestantism and the Spirit of Capitalism in his *magnum opus* "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" (originally in German "Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus"). Observing the dominance of Protestant individuals in the German business elite, Weber raised questions in his book (1904/1905) about the influence of religious beliefs (*religiöser Glaube*) on the economic behavior (*Wirtschaftsverhalten*) of its adherents, which lead to business success and social status. This interest has driven further research to understand the relationship between religious doctrine and achievement in the business world. Weber (1971) proposed the intriguing assumption that rationality (*Rationalität*) is the key to explaining the cultural superiority of the Western world (*abendländische Kultur*). In an economic context, profit-seeking activities are carried out rationally and systematically, regulated by transparent systems, and executed by individuals capable of carefully calculating risks and benefits. Weber emphasized the importance of systematization in achieving profit, supported by regular bookkeeping, separation of company and personal assets, and awareness of one's position within a structured legal and administrative framework. Questions arise from Weber's analysis: What underlies the emergence of capitalism, rational organization, and the concept of free agents in society? Statistical data confirms that the majority of business elites come from Protestant backgrounds in a religiously diverse society, indicating that Protestants have surpassed traditional stages in economic activities. Therefore, Weber focused on searching for the roots of the phenomenon of capitalism, rational organization, and the existence of free agents within the social structure.

According to Weber (1971), the internal factor of organized perception, both individual and corporate, regarding faith is not influenced by temporary external historical factors or religious

teachings or their spiritual dimensions (Mawikere, Hura, Mawikere and Mawikere, 2024). This view differs from Karl Marx's approach, which emphasizes the influence of material reality on human perceptions (Schroeder, 2002). Weber proposed that religion creates significant differences in society and drives social reality. Within religious doctrines, especially in Calvinism, attitudes and lifestyles of its adherents are formed, such as the doctrine of election/predestination. Calvinists believe that as a consequence of the fall into sin, humans are sinful, corrupt (depravity of man), and have no hope of salvation. God, with His absolute power, chooses those who will be saved. Subsequently, Christ is sent to redeem those chosen from their sins. The Holy Spirit is sent to apply this grace by restoring them; so that all the chosen may believe, repent, remain faithful unto death, and be saved. The selection of the saved has been predetermined by God from the beginning, and salvation or eternal life is given by God to the chosen.

Weber emphasizes that the doctrine of election or predestination is specifically related to Calvinism and needs to be understood in the context of other doctrines such as election, God's knowledge, God's sovereignty, human depravity, and so on, which then become triggers for the fervor of its adherents to engage in economic activities (Poggi, 1983). According to Erickson (2013), the doctrine of election is the selection of some people for eternal life, while predestination refers to God's will for everything that happens. Those chosen by God are called the elect, who are entitled to eternal life. From this, arises the question of one's status before God; how does one know that they are chosen by God? To dispel doubts, everyone will show sincerity in work and have a sense of responsibility in everything. They will learn, pursue, and engage in all activities as evidence of God's presence and favor in their lives as the chosen people. With no certainty whether one is chosen and receives eternal life or salvation, which is entirely dependent on God's free grace, Calvinist Protestant adherents diligently, diligently, and disciplinedly seek signs of eternal life in this world. As a result, failure in efforts becomes an indicator that one is not chosen to receive salvation or eternal life.

As previously outlined, to alleviate religious doubts (regarding whether one is among the chosen or not), individuals demonstrate their loyalty through hard work. This belief mandates believers to work, as labor is seen as a way of life in accordance with God's will, referred to as the human Beruf. Beruf, or calling, is a religious concept of achieving success in life. It asserts that work is not merely an activity but also a sacred duty. Work is deemed sacrosanct because it is viewed as a religious endeavor that ensures salvation. This attitude towards work is termed as inner-worldly asceticism or traditional asceticism, which was held by Christian societies in Western Europe and the United States during agrarian times. Inner-worldly or traditional asceticism is a form of religious devotion expressed through a spirit of hard work and simple living, as a means to affirm one's status as the chosen people. This socio-theological thought shares similarities with the spirit of capitalism, which is based on values such as diligence, thriftiness, calculation, rationality, and self-restraint.

The relationship between Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism becomes feasible due to the rationalization of the world and the rejection of magical practices, which are attempts to manipulate occult forces to attain salvation. These religious teachings emphasize the importance

of dignity, hard work, and perseverance, rather than merely waiting for luck to come. Weber's perspective on the relationship between Protestantism and the Spirit of Capitalism highlights the significance of Protestant ethics, particularly in Calvinism, in shaping attitudes and lifestyles that drive business success (Poggi, 1983;Mawikere and Hura, 2022a). Weber (1971) indicates that religious beliefs, especially the doctrine of Election or Predestation, play a key role in shaping individual actions and social structures (Mawikere, Hura, Mawikere and Mawikere, 2024). This doctrine encourages believers to prove their loyalty through hard work, regarding labor as a sacred duty that ensures salvation. The concept of *Beruf*, or vocation, reflects the religious view of achieving success through hard work and simple living, in line with capitalist values such as diligence, thriftiness, and rationality. The relationship between Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism becomes possible due to the rejection of magical practices and the emphasis on the importance of hard work and perseverance, which triggers the rationalization process of the world. Thus, Weber's perspective leads to a profound understanding of how religion influences the economic and social structure in society.

Differences of opinion and Defense of Weber's Thesis on the Interaction Between Religion and Society

According to Kana (2006), several criticisms have been raised against Max Weber's thesis by scholars. Among these critics are R.H. Tawney in his work "Religion and the Rise of Capitalism" and Samuelsson in "Religion and Economic Action: A Critique of Max Weber". Tawney (1998) highlights the concept of *Beruf* or "vocation" or "calling" which Weber considers a personal consideration, not social or collective. How can this aspect of personal consideration be connected to the overall societal action system? Samuelsson's (1964) criticism of Max Weber's thesis highlights several aspects considered inadequate, including the assessment that Weber fails to provide strong empirical evidence to support his claims, overly emphasizes religious determinism without considering other contributing factors to the formation of capitalism, and tends to overlook religious diversity and broader historical perspectives. Additionally, critics often point out that Weber fails to explain concretely how religious beliefs, such as Calvinist predestination, directly produce the spirit of capitalism. Weber responds to these criticisms by affirming that his focus is not on pure theological study but on sociological examination of the possible relationships between certain phenomena hypothesized or theoretically related. Furthermore, the opinion of sociologist Talcott Parsons, who assesses that Weber oversimplifies issues by focusing only on key aspects like *Beruf/*vocation, which is considered too elementary or narrow an approach. Parsons (1968) argues that Weber overlooks the complexity of broader social structures and interactions between various factors in shaping social action. Thus, although Parsons further develops Weber's thesis rather than deconstructing it, he also highlights Weber's weaknesses in understanding the truly complex and multifaceted dynamics of social life.

However, Robert Bellah provided a defense response to Weber by referring to his own research on the progress occurring in Japan. Bellah (1957) found that these advancements were triggered by the factor of "loyalty" (*chu*), which was an implementation of the Japanese people's

belief in the "Tokugawa religion." Bellah demonstrated that critics of Weber often overlook the essence of what Weber aimed to show, which is the issue of "structural transformation" or the effort to explain social dynamics and related factors. For him, everything doesn't happen by chance; there are factors or aspects that drive it.

Bellah stated that Weber's effort represented a breakthrough, as it not only explored the possibility of a causal relationship between religious doctrines and economic actions or between Protestant and Catholic groups in economic growth, but also delved into how these factors contribute to the structural transformation of society. Implicit in Weber's work is the assertion that emergent actions can diverge significantly from normative foundations. Consequently, he underscores the limited influence of ideas in shaping action systems. The connection between thought and action isn't always evident, even in rational economic behaviors. While concepts like *beruf*/vocation or "calling" may imply a linkage to religious conviction, it's crucial to recognize that not all daily behavioral patterns can be neatly encapsulated within this framework. Weber's focus on motivation and psychological drives in actions urges us to consider a broader range of influences beyond religious conviction when analyzing behavioral patterns. However, Tawney (1998) questions this view. If psychological factors are important for driving action, is it possible that religious interpretations themselves are the result of economic development? This is considering the views of Karl Marx and his followers who state that material reality influences the formation of particular views, including religion.

Weber firmly responds to the aforementioned criticism. He asserts that his intention is not to replace materialistic cause-and-effect explanations with a spiritualist approach to culture and history. What Weber seeks are factors that support socio-economic phenomena, including the potential influence of religious doctrines. According to Weber, there is a convergence between religious ideas/doctrines and the drive for material necessity, where both mutually reinforce each other. This affinity creates a certain system that allows religion to function as a social impetus (*sozialer Antrieb*). Weber expresses his dissatisfaction with Marx's highly materialistic explanations (Schroeder, 2002). Therefore, Weber perceives the reality regarding the "transformative ability of religion". In his research, Weber states that religious consciousness is not merely a reflection of socio-economic reality, as expressed by Marx, but an autonomous factor with the potential to shape behavioral systems and even implement structural changes relevant to socio-economic reality.

Max Weber's thesis cannot be separated from the idealistic landscape dominating Europe at the turn of the 20th century. Dissatisfied with positivist explanations clinging to mechanistic cause-and-effect relationships, Weber adopted a methodological approach known as *verstehen* (understanding/comprehension) in analyzing the encountered substance. *Verstehen* is a methodological approach that seeks to understand the meanings surrounding social and historical events. This approach departs from the idea that every social situation is supported by a network of meanings created by the actors or participants involved in that situation. *Verstehen*, or "understanding", is the result of a comprehensive effort to capture the internal structure of actions, aiming to reveal the "something" underlying explicit or visible actions.

With this approach, Weber seeks to understand the "spirit" (*Geist*) behind capitalist-oriented economic actions. He attempts to capture the values reflected by Protestantism, especially Calvinism, which is puritanical. In accepting these seemingly diverse values, Weber finds that the affinity between the "spirit" (*Geist*) and "economic actions" (*Wirtschaftshandeln*) mutually reinforce each other, forming a specific system of actions.

However, is seeking the "subjective meaning of actions" a sustainable approach as a scientific method? Weber is interested in the possibility of a relationship between motives and actions. Weber's thesis and overall sociology are considered by Marxist structuralists to be pre-scientific. For them, the goal of science is not to seek explanations for the motives of a social event, but to provide analysis of how the structure determines the roles of the actors (Mawikere and Hura, 2022a). For structuralist scientists, individual humans are not the main scientific targets; what is more important is social structure, and knowledge is not the result of abstracting empirical phenomena, but of theoretical activity.

Thus, Weber's approach sparks debate with structuralist views, especially followers of Karl Marx, about the nature of knowledge in the social sciences. Nevertheless, the above description asserts that Weber is a pioneer in attempting to understand the reciprocal relationship between social structure and spiritual reality, between the social world and inner consciousness referring to something sacred and transcendental.

The Dynamics of Economic Behavior in Asian and Indonesian Society: Critique and Deepening of Weber's Thesis

In exploring the dynamics of Indonesian society, Max Weber's ideas play a central role in the fields of sociology and anthropology. Weber developed theories that link religion, culture, and economic development, which have become the main focus for researchers interested in understanding social and economic changes in Indonesia.

Syed Hussein Alatas criticized Weber in his book "The Myth of the Lazy Native" (1977). In this book, Alatas takes a critical perspective on Weber's works, especially in the context of Weber's understanding of Southeast Asia. Alatas highlights Weber's perspective, which is considered too Eurocentric, and criticizes Weber's views on society and religion in the region. As a major critic of Weber's theory, Alatas conducted a series of studies to test the validity of these theses. In his research, Alatas examined differences in economic behavior and work outcomes between Malay Muslims and other groups. The results showed that factors such as migration and positions outside the government bureaucracy structure influenced economic behavior more than the direct influence of religious teachings. From this, Alatas concluded that the relationship between religion and economic behavior is more complex than mere direct correlation, but rather a mutually interrelated causal relationship.

However, Alatas's perspective also raises critical questions. Despite similarities in religious beliefs among Islamic adherents, the level of understanding and appreciation of these teachings can vary. This is influenced by the complex interaction between religious teachings and the socio-economic structure of society. Meanwhile, Weber himself has highlighted the importance of

renewal carried out by the Protestant-Calvinist movement in promoting the spirit of capitalism, indicating the complexity of the relationship between religion and economic behavior.

Research by anthropologist Clifford Geertz also makes significant contributions to identifying, referencing, and deepening Weber's theory in the context of Indonesia as part of Asian society. Through his research in Mojokuto (Pare, Kediri) and Tabanan in Bali, Geertz highlights the role of religion in economic development in local communities in Indonesia. Geertz found that the santri group in Mojokuto, although not geographically or ethnically isolated, underwent a reform process similar to the "Protestant ethic". However, Geertz also noted that the capitalist spirit found among the santri was not always supported by strong organizational structures, indicating the complexity in shaping economic behavior.

Kunto Widjojo's detailed study in Dukuh Batur adds a new dimension to the identification and in-depth analysis of the relationship between religion and entrepreneurship. In his research (Kana, 2006), Widjojo found that although the iron craft entrepreneurs in Batur were not part of the urban population or followers of the Islamic reformist movement, they still firmly adhered to Islamic traditions. This indicates that Islamic traditionalism can coexist with modernity, while the occupation as craftsmen has been part of their ancestral heritage since the Majapahit era.

Thus, through various studies, we can witness the complexity of the relationship between religion, culture, and economic behavior in Indonesia. While Weber's theory provides an important foundation, a deeper understanding requires continuous research and multidimensional approaches involving various disciplines.

The discourse on the impact of religion on society, as debated from Max Weber's perspective, has drawn attention to a series of studies that continue to deepen its concept of the interconnection between Protestantism and the Spirit of Capitalism. Weber highlighted the dominance of Protestants in the business elite sector of Germany, raising questions about how religious beliefs influence one's economic success and social status. This interest has driven further research to investigate the relationship between religious doctrines and achievements in the realm of business. On the other hand, Weber put forth the intriguing hypothesis that rationality is a key factor in understanding Western cultural dominance, particularly in economic contexts. He emphasized the importance of orderly organizational structures in achieving profit, supported by organized bookkeeping practices and the separation of corporate and personal assets. Weber's analysis raises thought-provoking questions about the emergence of capitalism, rational organization, and the concept of the autonomous individual in society.

However, there are criticisms of Weber's ideas, particularly from scholars like R.H. Tawney and Samuelson, who highlight Weber's shortcomings in directly connecting broader social structures with religious teachings. Nevertheless, Robert Bellah defends Weber by asserting the importance of Weber's understanding of structural transformations in society. In Indonesia, Weber's thinking plays a significant role in understanding social and economic changes, although criticism of his theory has prompted further research, including Alatas' study highlighting the complexity of the relationship between religion and economic behavior. Studies by Clifford Geertz and Kunto Widjojo (Kana, 2006) also provide valuable insights into the relationship between

religion and economics in Indonesia. Thus, while Weber's theory provides an important foundation, a deeper understanding requires continuous research and multidimensional approaches involving various disciplines.

The Dynamics of Interaction Between Religion and Society: A Complex Study of Mutual Influence

As previously discussed, within the context of the complex dynamics between religion and society, there exists a mutually influential interaction. This research leads to an understanding of the influence of society and its culture on religion, encompassing dimensions of teachings and theology. Social science perspectives have identified a close relationship between religion and society, while theological philosophical viewpoints emphasize the responsibility of believers towards their beliefs and hopes, both internally and in interaction with diverse worldviews. The experience of faith within the context of the world demands a deep understanding of the relationship between faith and its surrounding reality, which needs to be critically explored through dialogue with the world. "World" is interpreted as the totality of human existence and the universe, including its history. Religion is viewed as a human and worldly phenomenon, in line with the belief of religious people that their religion stems from spiritual experiences that transcend human and worldly boundaries. Social reality significantly impacts communal life and is considered an integral part of human life. Religion, as a human community bound by certain faith beliefs, is one of the important aspects in the social structure of society.

In the fields of sociology and anthropology of religion, religion is viewed as a social and cultural phenomenon that depends on belief in the transcendent dimension or special revelation (Kana, 2006). This concept aligns with Peter Berger's perspective, who developed the idea of reciprocal interaction between religion and society. Berger (1967) posited that religion is a product of human social activity and plays a significant role in shaping and maintaining social structures. He describes religion as a "sacred canopy" that provides psychological protection for individuals and society from the uncertainty and chaos of the world. Thus, religion provides a framework of reference that guides meaning, values, and purposes for individuals and social groups. Berger also highlights that religion not only accepts views from society but actively shapes social reality. In a process known as "reification," religious concepts become real in the minds of humans and influence their worldview. Additionally, Berger (1967) emphasizes the increasing phenomenon of religious pluralism in modern society. According to him, this pluralism encourages individuals to criticize and reflect on their religious beliefs and practices, opening up opportunities for various interpretations of religion. Overall, Berger asserts that the relationship between religion and society is dynamic and mutually influential. Religion not only reflects the values and norms of society but also contributes to shaping and changing the social and cultural structures of that society.

Research in this field focuses on the worldly and cultural expressions of religion, which are reflected in various aspects such as fellowship activities, teachings, worship, and interactions with the world and the surrounding society. Faith is seen as humanity's response to spiritual

experiences, which involve a relationship with something beyond one's existence and determine the direction and purpose of life. Religion, as the institutionalization of faith experiences, is reflected in worship practices and the daily lives of believers. Religious teachings are not just theories but concrete guidelines that formulate faith and direct behavior. Worship practices play a crucial role in developing lived experiences of faith, making faith and religion intimately intertwined in the lives of individuals and communities.

The relationship between faith and the world, or religion and society, is a complex dynamic that has evolved throughout human history. For example, in the history of the Christian Church, the church initially started as a small minority living in conflict with the surrounding world. However, over time, particularly after becoming the official religion in the 4th century, the church increasingly integrated with the structure and culture of society, even becoming part of political power. The Middle Ages witnessed conflicts between political power and religious authority in European Christian society (Collins and Price, 2003). In the 16th century, the Reformation movement emerged led by figures such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli. This movement challenged the practices of the Roman Catholic Church considered deviating from original Christian teachings. An important aspect of the Reformation was the emphasis on the authority of the Bible as the sole source of truth in Christianity, and the importance of the individual relationship between humans and God, without the church as intermediary. The Reformation also affected the relationship between the church and the world. For example, under the influence of Calvinism, particularly in the form of Puritanism in England and Presbyterianism in Scotland, concepts of hard work, work ethic, and social responsibility emerged. This brought significant changes in the social and economic structure of Western Europe. In the 18th and 19th centuries, significant developments occurred in the relationship between religion and society. On one hand, Enlightenment thinking encouraged emphasis on rationality and science, sometimes conflicting with religious dogma. On the other hand, religious movements like the Great Awakening in the United States and the Wesleyan Movement in England brought spiritual revival, emphasizing personal experience and repentance. In the 20th century, significant developments took place in the relationship between religion and society. For example, the emergence of theories of separation of church and state, especially in Western countries, emphasizing religious freedom and pluralism. Globally, there was a significant growth of non-Western religions, such as Islam in Africa and Asia, as well as Pentecostalism in Latin America and Africa. The postmodern era, which began around the end of the 20th century, posed new challenges to the relationship between faith and the world. This era is marked by skepticism towards grand narratives and emphasis on plurality, relativism, and diversity. This influences the understanding of religion and society, with many individuals adopting spiritual views not bound to specific religious traditions. Additionally, new religious movements emerged attempting to address the spiritual void in postmodern society.

This development brings new challenges for religions, which require adaptation to changes in society as well as understanding and response to the needs and challenges of their followers. The crisis of the 20th century elicited various reactions, ranging from restoration to efforts to find new, more harmonious relationships between faith and the world. Understanding society and

culture is crucial for religious communities in interpreting religious teachings relevantly for the present time. In confronting the complexity and evolving challenges, religions must be able to adapt and act responsibly. Although religions continue to provide moral and spiritual guidance, it is important to critically understand their society and social realities to contribute positively to the development of a better society. The relationship between religion and society should be dialectical, where both influence and inspire each other to grow and develop (Kana, 2006).

Faith, in all its developments, always interacts with the culture in which it is expressed. This process, often referred to as inculturation, is a mediation between faith and a specific socio-cultural context. Inculturation is not just a strategy to attract new followers but is a fundamental theological principle. When missionaries proclaim the Gospel in different cultures, they seek to communicate it in ways understandable to the local community. In the current context, inculturation by believers who experience the events of Jesus within their own cultural dynamics becomes important. However, there is tension between the universality of the Gospel message and the need for inculturation within specific cultures. To address this tension, cross-cultural communication between the culture bearing witness and the one receiving the testimony is necessary. Although major religions are rooted in various cultures and influenced by them, religion also has a unique contribution through the expression of faith in special revelation.

An in-depth analysis of Max Weber's views on the influence of religion on society reveals a rich and relevant perspective in understanding social dynamics. Weber highlights the central role of Protestant ethical values, especially among Calvinists, in shaping the social and economic structures that form the foundation of modern capitalism (Mawikere and Hura, 2022a;Mawikere, Hura, Mawikere and Mawikere, 2024). He emphasizes that Calvinist doctrines of predestination and moral responsibility play a significant role in fostering the spirit of hard work, wealth accumulation, and economic rationality within society. Weber's perspective highlights the complexity of the interaction between religious beliefs and everyday practices, where religious values not only provide moral guidance but also shape the social structures that influence individual actions and the collective development of society.

Thus, society has a significant influence on the development of religion. The dynamic interaction between religion and society creates an environment where religion is not only a part of social life but is also reflected in the culture, customs, and structures of society itself. Society actively influences the formation and transformation of religion, while religion also plays a crucial role in shaping norms, values, and social identities within society. In the complexity of these relationships, mutual understanding and appreciation of each other's roles become key to creating harmonious relationships and building an inclusive and empowered society.

The Perspective of Niebuhr's Study in Highlighting the Influence of Society on Religion

Helmut Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962) played a central role in shaping the understanding of the complexity of the relationship between Christianity and cultural dynamics in the 20th century. His monumental works, such as the book "Christ and Culture" (1951) and "Radical Monotheism and Western Culture" (1960), not only served as significant milestones in the history

of theological thought but also provided a strong foundation for the development of theology and missiology in the future. Born and raised in Missouri in a family heavily influenced by religious life, Niebuhr had a solid background to explore the relationship between Christian faith and the surrounding cultural reality (Mawikere and Hura, 2022b).

After completing his education at Elmhurst College and Eden Theological Seminary, Niebuhr chose to focus on an academic career. Joining the faculty of Yale Divinity School, he became one of the pioneers of what became known as the "Yale School", a theological movement that significantly impacted the evolution of post-liberal theological thought. Alongside his colleague, Hans Frei, Niebuhr laid the foundation for a theological paradigm that emphasized the importance of cultural context in interpreting Christian faith. His contributions extended beyond the domains of Christian theology and ethics, reaching into the field of missiology, where his ideas on the interaction between faith and culture enlightened many theologians and scholars in other disciplines who followed his lead.

Niebuhr's thinking brings the complexity of the relationship between Christianity and human culture into focus. In his highly monumental work, "Christ and Culture," Niebuhr presents five main perspectives on how Christ interacts with human culture, providing diverse insights to address this complex reality. His analysis delves deeper into how Christianity can maintain harmonious or conflicting relationships with the culture of its surrounding society. In developing his theory of the relationship between religion and culture, Niebuhr encounters several conflicting views, especially regarding the influence of society on religion (Mawikere and Hura, 2022b). Niebuhr carefully presents these views as a foundation for a better understanding of the dynamics of interaction between Christianity and human culture. Through this framework, he broadens insights into the complexity of this relationship, considering aspects such as religion's adaptation to culture, conflicts arising between religious values and culture, and the possibility of cultural transformation through religious influence. Niebuhr (1951) offers a sharp and detailed perspective on this complexity, providing a rich groundwork for further scholarly discussion on the dynamics of interaction between Christianity and human culture. His analysis highlights the importance of acknowledging differences and complexity in understanding this relationship, emphasizing the importance of dialogue and deep understanding in responding to it. Thus, Niebuhr's contribution not only inspires theological thought but also provides a solid foundation for anthropological and social analysis of religious and cultural phenomena.

The first perspective from Niebuhr is "Christ against Culture". The concept of 'Christ Against Culture" articulated by Niebuhr highlights the fundamental conflict between the teachings of Christ and human culture. In this perspective, Christ is understood as something contrary to human culture, leading to a stance of rejection and avoidance of cultural expressions in general. This is known as the "antagonistic attitude," where religion is seen as a force that must oppose and replace local culture with Christian culture (Verkuyl, 1992). In the context of "Christ Against Culture," Niebuhr underscores the inherent conflict between the teachings of Christ and the values and practices of human culture. Niebuhr acknowledges that culture, in its various forms, often

reflects the sin and imperfection of humanity. These cultural values, often influenced by selfish impulses and power, contradict the moral and spiritual principles taught by Christ.

Niebuhr's perspective on "Christ Against Culture" encapsulates several pivotal points warranting attention. Initially, Niebuhr posits that human culture is intrinsically marred and frequently subverted by the presence of sin. He accentuates the profound disparity between the prevalent facets of human culture—such as greed, power, oppression, and selfishness—and the ethical precepts espoused by Christ, which revolve around love, justice, compassion, and self-sacrifice. Niebuhr underscores the conflict between the sinful nature of human culture and the idealistic teachings of Christ. Secondly, Niebuhr vehemently opposes ideologies that advocate for compromise with culture or even the complete assimilation of Christianity into cultural paradigms. He contends that endeavors to harmonize Christ's teachings with cultural norms often culminate in a distortion of religious understanding. Thirdly, Niebuhr issues a cautionary admonition against excessive assimilation into human culture, cautioning that such assimilation may result in the betrayal of Christ's moral precepts. Due to its fallen state, human culture possesses the capacity to influence Christian beliefs and practices, thereby compromising their authenticity and spiritual integrity. Fourthly, Niebuhr's conception of "Christ Against Culture" underscores the imperative of moral autonomy for Christians. This entails a recognition of the deleterious impact of culture and a steadfast dedication to upholding the integrity of Christ's teachings across all spheres of life. Fifthly, Niebuhr acknowledges the inherent paradox within this perspective. Despite affirming the inherent conflict between Christ and culture, he also acknowledges the necessity of Christ's involvement in the world. This complexity delineates Niebuhr's nuanced approach to the interplay between religion and culture, wherein he endeavors to strike a delicate balance between preserving religious integrity and constructively engaging with the prevailing cultural milieu.

In the substance of thought "Christ Against Culture," the tension underlying the conflict between the ideal teachings of Christ and the reality of human culture tainted by sin and weaknesses is clearly depicted. Niebuhr highlights the essence of this dilemma, emphasizing the importance of maintaining the moral and spiritual integrity of the Christian religion amidst the temptations and pressures arising from conflicting cultures. Niebuhr's analysis (1951) reflects a profound understanding of the complexity of the challenges faced in maintaining fidelity to Christ's teachings within a culture that may not always support the values steadfastly held by the Christian religion. He asserts that compromising with cultural values contrary to Christ's teachings can threaten the integrity and sanctity of the religion itself. In this context, Niebuhr emphasizes that maintaining the moral and spiritual integrity of the Christian religion is not an easy task, especially in the face of temptations and pressures from a culture that tends to offer choices conflicting with religious values. However, the importance of remaining faithful to Christ's teachings should not be underestimated, as it affects not only the spiritual identity of individual Christians but also the integrity and sanctity of the religion itself. When elucidating the perspective of "Christ Against Culture," Niebuhr emphasizes that this challenge should not be taken lightly because compromising with values contrary to Christ's teachings can blur the line between right and wrong, thereby undermining the essence of Christianity as a moral and spiritual institution. In conclusion,

in Niebuhr's view of "Christ Against Culture," there is a strong emphasis on the need to maintain the moral and spiritual integrity of the Christian religion amidst the complexity of conflicting cultures. Thus, this thought offers a solid foundation for further reflection on the challenges and responsibilities of individual Christians in maintaining fidelity to Christ's teachings in an ever-changing cultural context.

The second perspective elucidated by Niebuhr is the concept of the "Christ of culture," which proposes a more inclusive approach to culture. In this perspective, Christianity is considered to adapt to the existing culture, acknowledging cultural values as an integral part of faith expression. Niebuhr identifies this approach as "an accommodating attitude," where the Gospel is adapted to local culture to facilitate the acceptance of religious messages while also acknowledging syncretism, the equivalence of Christ and culture, leading to a tendency to merge cultural components with the Gospel. In the context of the "Christ of culture," Niebuhr highlights the potential to find Christ in various expressions of human culture and sees culture itself as a medium for understanding and expressing the presence of Christ in the world.

The "Christ of culture" perspective, as articulated by Niebuhr, encompasses several noteworthy facets that warrant exploration: First and foremost, Niebuhr underscores the inherent potential of human culture, with its multifaceted layers, to embody the values and principles exemplified by Christ. He posits that Christ's influence transcends doctrinal confines and permeates diverse cultural expressions, spanning realms such as art, literature, music, and philosophy. From Niebuhr's vantage point, culture serves as a conduit through which the essence of Christ can be mirrored and effectively communicated to humanity. Secondly, Niebuhr espouses the belief that culture serves as a potent vehicle for disseminating the teachings and moral ethos of Christianity to a broader societal audience. He perceives avenues such as art, literature, and other forms of media as invaluable mediums for imparting the spiritual and ethical tenets of Christ to individuals who may not have direct exposure to Christian doctrine. Thirdly, the "Christ of culture" perspective accentuates the transformative role of Christ in ameliorating and elevating human culture, notwithstanding its inherent flaws and susceptibility to sin. Niebuhr contends that Christ's pervasive presence within culture has the capacity to instigate positive moral and social reform, fostering ideals of justice, love, and mercy within the fabric of society. Fourthly, while acknowledging the potential for culture to serve as a reflective mirror of Christ's presence, Niebuhr underscores the imperative of exercising discernment in evaluating cultural expressions. He cautions that not all facets of culture inherently align with Christ's values, necessitating a critical appraisal of cultural productions and consumptions. Lastly, Niebuhr advocates for the adaptive engagement of the church and Christians within their cultural milieu. This entails employing accessible language, symbols, and communication mediums that resonate with local communities, thereby facilitating a pertinent and meaningful dissemination of Christ's message. Consequently, the "Christ of culture" perspective, as elucidated by Niebuhr, advocates for an inclusive and adaptive approach to the symbiotic relationship between Christianity and human culture. It engenders a deeper appreciation for the manifold ways in which Christ's presence can manifest

across various facets of human existence, while concurrently underscoring Christianity's potential as a catalytic force for societal transformation.

In the perspective of the concept "Christ of Culture," Niebuhr portrays a paradigm that suggests human culture is not inherently at odds with the teachings of Christianity. Instead, he proposes that culture can serve as a means through which the presence of Christ can be identified and expressed to humanity. Niebuhr, in his analysis, carefully acknowledges the complexity of the relationship between religion and culture; however, rather than merely describing this paradox, he highlights the collaborative potential between the two. Thus, he views this collaboration as having the capacity to disseminate Christ's values and promote broad moral and spiritual transformation within society. Niebuhr's emphasis on the involvement of religion in culture is not an attempt to reduce complexity, but rather offers a foundation for deeper discussions on how religion can actively play a role in inspiring and shaping the social and cultural dynamics of humanity.

The third perspective is "Christ Above Culture." In the paradigm of "Christ Above Culture," Niebuhr (1951) asserts the role of Christ as the ultimate authority that not only controls but also transforms human culture. This concept highlights that humans tend to fall into sin and weakness due to their fallen nature. Therefore, the presence of Christ as a high moral and spiritual standard is necessary to guide and evaluate that culture. Firstly, Niebuhr emphasizes Christ's Moral Absolutism, which assumes Christ as an unquestionable moral authority. This means that the values and principles found in Christ's teachings should be the center of all human activities, including within the realm of culture. Secondly, Niebuhr highlights the need for Separation from Corrupt Culture. He acknowledges that human culture is often contaminated by sin and selfishness. Therefore, he advocates for separating oneself from corrupt culture and building communities or movements based on purer Christ-like principles. Thirdly, Niebuhr advocates for Cultural Transformation. Despite recognizing the flaws of human culture, Niebuhr does not reject it entirely. Instead, he believes that Christ should work through His people to transform the culture itself. This means that Christ's values should permeate the structures and institutions of culture to make them more in line with God's will. Fourthly, Niebuhr's perspective also includes Critique of Cultural Weaknesses. He explicitly highlights the tendency of culture to fall into greed, power, and selfishness while also acknowledging the valuable values within it. Therefore, the dominant presence of Christ is necessary to evaluate and correct misguided culture, ensuring that the values pursued align with the moral teachings represented by Christ. Thus, Niebuhr's paradigm of "Christ Above Culture" (1951) is not just a theoretical concept but a call to action for active Christian engagement in advocating Christ's values in everyday life, including within the realm of culture, to achieve the desired moral and spiritual transformation in society.

In essence, the paradigm of "Christ Above Culture" highlights the importance of Christ as the moral and spiritual standard that not only controls but also transforms human culture. Niebuhr emphatically stresses that a true understanding of Christ and His principles should serve as the foundation for constructive cultural transformation, guiding humans towards higher moral and spiritual goals. In this context, Niebuhr offers the view that Christ should play a central role in governing the values and direction of human culture. Christ, in this concept, is regarded as the

source of absolute moral authority, whose principles should underpin every aspect of human life, including within the realm of culture. Therefore, a correct understanding of Christ and His teachings is key to sustainable change in human culture. Niebuhr also asserts that the desired cultural transformation should be oriented towards enhancing human morality and spirituality. By striving for alignment with Christ's teachings, culture can become a means to shape individuals who are morally and spiritually better, and to create a fairer and more empowered society. Niebuhr's perspective reflects a call to bring Christ into every aspect of human life, including cultural dynamics. This emphasizes that Christ's presence is not merely a matter of individual existence but also relevant in the shaping and evolution of human culture. By building a culture rooted in Christ's values, Niebuhr argues that humans can achieve greater moral and spiritual potential, directing human life towards nobler goals. Therefore, the paradigm of "Christ Above Culture" proposed by Niebuhr depicts a call for fundamental transformation in how humans understand and interact with culture, with Christ as the central and primary guide on the journey towards moral and spiritual perfection.

Next is the fourth perspective on "Christ and Culture in Paradox" by Niebuhr (1951), which highlights the complexity of the relationship between the ideal teachings of Christ and the reality of culture tainted by human sin and weakness. Firstly, Niebuhr emphasizes the inherent tension between Christ's teachings of love, justice, and forgiveness and the reality of culture often filled with selfishness, violence, and injustice. This creates a paradox where the application of Christ's ideal teachings is challenging in this fallen world. Secondly, Niebuhr opposes overly optimistic views regarding humanity's ability to achieve moral and social perfection without significant help from God. He acknowledges that human culture has the potential to reflect Christ's values but is also prone to sin and injustice. Thirdly, Niebuhr believes that Christ's involvement in this world is crucial to resolving this paradox. Christ is not only a source of moral inspiration but also an active agent of transformation in confronting human sin and weakness and bringing profound change to human life and culture. Fourthly, Niebuhr emphasizes the importance of accepting the reality of flawed and imperfect human culture. Rejecting the corruption of culture will only result in avoiding moral responsibility and unrealistic approaches to addressing the challenges faced by Christians. Fifthly, despite acknowledging this paradox, Niebuhr stresses the importance of acting in this world with the moral and spiritual principles taught by Christ. This includes the struggle for social justice, defending human rights, and a commitment to reforming human culture according to God's will. Thus, Niebuhr's perspective not only highlights the paradox of Christ and culture but also emphasizes the call to action aimed at improving the world according to Christ's teachings. This is what Niebuhr refers to as the "theology of dualists" or the attitude that seeks to separate faith from culture as two distinct layers, each standing on its own (Verkuyl. 1992)..

The discourse on "Christ and Culture in Paradox" highlights the complexity of the relationship between the Christian religion and human culture. Niebuhr emphasizes the tension between the ideal teachings of Christ and the reality of culture tainted by sin. In essence, this paradox arises from the difficulty of applying Christ's teachings encompassing love, justice, and forgiveness in the context of human life filled with selfishness, violence, and injustice. However,

Niebuhr does not merely highlight this paradox without providing a solution. He asserts the importance of Christ's involvement in this world as a solution to resolve this tension. For him, Christ not only becomes a source of moral inspiration but also an active agent of transformation in confronting human sin and weakness and bringing about profound changes in human life and culture. Furthermore, Niebuhr emphasizes the call to act while holding steadfast to the moral and spiritual values established by Christ. This includes the struggle for social justice, the defense of human rights, and a commitment to reform human culture in accordance with the will of God. Thus, Niebuhr's perspective not only highlights the paradox of Christ and culture but also provides clear direction for Christians to actively engage in addressing the moral and spiritual challenges faced in this world.

In the end, Niebuhr presents the fifth perspective on "Christ the Transformer of Culture," highlighting Christ's active role in transforming, rectifying, and sanctifying human culture. In this context, Niebuhr (1951) underscores several crucial points that depict Christ's transformational vision towards human culture. Firstly, Niebuhr comprehends Christ not only as the provider of high moral standards for human culture but also as an active transformative force in shaping that culture. Christ doesn't just teach certain values but also empowers his people to apply these values in their daily lives. Secondly, Niebuhr's view of Christ as a renewer of culture emphasizes that Christ is capable of altering the structures and institutions of human culture to align more closely with the will of God. This encompasses changes in political, economic, educational, and social systems that lead to justice, equality, and human dignity. Thirdly, Niebuhr believes that Christ works through his people to bring about transformation in culture. This means that Christians, as Christ's representatives in the world, have a responsibility to spread Christ's message and apply his values in all aspects of life, including culture. Fourthly, Niebuhr's perspective also includes criticism of cultural aspects that contradict Christ's teachings. He emphasizes the need to change or reject cultural practices that degrade human dignity, promote evil, or violate the moral principles established by Christ. Fifthly, although Niebuhr believes in the potential for cultural transformation through Christ, he also acknowledges that this process is not always easy or immediate. Challenges and obstacles may arise, and the desired changes may require time and effort. Thus, Niebuhr's perspective on "Christ the Transformer of Culture" not only portrays the aspiration for cultural improvement through Christ's teachings but also offers a realistic view of the complexity and challenges involved in the transformation process.

At the core of the perspective on "Christ Transforming Culture," there is an emphasis that Christ is not only the determinant of high moral standards for human culture but also acts as an active agent in changing and improving that culture itself. Niebuhr highlights the essence of Christ's involvement in shaping the face of human culture and asserts the importance of active participation by Christians in this transformation process. Niebuhr stresses that Christ is not merely a figure providing moral guidance from afar but is also an active force interacting with human culture, influencing the structures and values that govern societal life. Thus, Christ not only teaches values but also instigates practical changes in social, economic, political, and cultural systems. Furthermore, Niebuhr underscores the importance of active involvement by Christians in this

transformation process. He asserts that Christians play a crucial role in realizing Christ's vision for culture by spreading the Gospel message and practicing Christ's values in everyday life. This includes participating in advocating for social justice, promoting human rights, and reforming institutions that do not align with Christ's principles. However, Niebuhr also acknowledges the complexity and challenges that may arise in this transformation process. Desired changes do not always occur easily and are often met with resistance from forces that uphold the status quo. Therefore, awareness of these challenges and obstacles is crucial in preparing for the long-term struggle towards positive change. Despite facing such complexity, Niebuhr still sees Christ as a source of hope and strength for positive change in human culture and society. His belief in Christ's ability to transform hearts and minds and restore justice and love in social life strengthens his resolve to continue striving to build a better society in accordance with God's will. Thus, Niebuhr's perspective provides both inspirational and realistic guidance for efforts towards cultural transformation towards higher moral ideals.

In the view of Helmut Richard Niebuhr, the relationship between religion and society is a complex subject filled with intriguing dynamics. Niebuhr emphasizes that religion and society influence each other deeply and often in conflicting ways. His analysis reveals five main perspectives that demonstrate how Christianity interacts with human culture (Mawikere and Hura, 2022b). One of the primary emphases in Niebuhr's view is the conflict between the teachings of Christ and human cultural values. In the perspective of "Christ Against Culture," Niebuhr highlights how religion often conflicts with cultural practices tainted by sin and injustice. Religion is seen as a moral force that must challenge and transform corrupt culture. However, Niebuhr also acknowledges that religion cannot be completely separated from the cultural context in which it is rooted. In the perspective of "Christ of Culture," Niebuhr describes how Christianity may attempt to adapt to existing cultural values and practices. This indicates that society has a strong influence on how religion is understood and practiced by its followers. On the other hand, in the perspective of "Christ Above Culture," Niebuhr emphasizes that Christianity must have a moral authority independent of human culture. Christ is viewed as the highest authority that must be recognized and obeyed by humans, even if it contradicts the dominant cultural values at a given time. Moreover, Niebuhr also recognizes that the relationship between religion and society often occurs in complex paradoxes. In the perspective of "Christ and Culture in Paradox," Niebuhr underscores the tension between the idealism of Christ's teachings and the reality of human sin reflected in culture. Society can be a source of moral inspiration but can also be a source of temptation and confusion for the faithful. Finally, in the perspective of "Christ Transforming Culture," Niebuhr highlights the active role of Christ in changing and sanctifying human culture. Religion not only receives influence from society but also seeks to transform it according to the values of the kingdom of God. Thus, through Niebuhr's analysis, we can see how complex the relationship between religion and society is and how they influence each other in efforts to achieve different spiritual and moral goals.

Religion and Social Reality: A Case Study of Kyai Sadrach's Ministry in Indonesia

In the context of Indonesia, one of the comparisons from Niebuhr's Thesis on Christ and Culture is illustrated in research examining the ministry of Kyai Sadrach, a local Christian who serves as a contextual evangelist in Java, as explored in Soetarman S. Partonadi's dissertation titled "Sadrach's Community and Its Contextual Roots: A Nineteenth Century Javanese Expression of Christianity". According to Partonadi's research (1988), in the 19th century, the preaching of the Gospel in Java had a paradoxical nuance. European missionaries, despite originating from the Netherlands, Germany, and England, had great enthusiasm for spreading the Gospel to the Javanese people. However, they tended to overlook aspects of culture, education, economy, and local history. Their perspective was limited to a Western viewpoint, particularly Dutch. On the other hand, the church in Java began to take root in Javanese cultural and religious elements, reflected in Sadrach's leadership. In addition to conveying the Gospel, they also brought Reformed/Calvinist church traditions and Western theological concepts such as Christology and Soteriology to the Javanese community. At that time, Javanese society still strongly held onto their cultural and religious values, including Kejawen, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Sadrach, as a native evangelist, succeeded in communicating the Gospel within the context of Javanese life, supported by his educational background and role as a *guru ngelmu* and *kyai*. By applying the Gospel in the context of Javanese life and culture, Sadrach managed to win the sympathy of the Javanese people and make his preaching more easily understood and accepted, especially by new Christians. Ironically, many Western missionaries refused to acknowledge Sadrach as a native evangelist, doubting his theology and considering it inadequate. However, this conflict can be understood when considering that every religion undergoes a process of localization or contextualization when spread to different cultures. The Gospel and the Church, originating from Hebrew-Greek culture and popular in the West, had to be adapted to Javanese culture. Sadrach's struggles reflect how social and cultural realities influence religion.

According to Partonadi (1988), to explore the influence of social and cultural realities on religion, particularly through the life and ministry of Sadrach, it is important to consider his background as well as the social and cultural context in Java in the 19th century, including Kejawen and Islam. Firstly, Sadrach's independent leadership is reflected in his background as a guru ngelmu and kyai in the pesantren. In Javanese culture, a kyai is considered a respected and independent figure, both economically, educationally, and spiritually. As someone with an Islamic background, Sadrach adopted the leadership style of a kyai, which played a significant role in pioneering the Christian congregation. Through discussions and debates reminiscent of Javanese kyai, Sadrach succeeded in convincing many Javanese people to embrace the Christian faith without relying on Western missionaries. His leadership style also supported the steadfast growth of Sadrach's congregation amidst differences with churches established by Western missionaries. Sadrach's leadership was also tailored to the rural context, where communal life was prioritized over personal interests. The spirit of cooperation and mutual assistance became the primary principles of village life, and Sadrach acted as a unifying symbol for the community. His unique charisma and Javanese roots added a distinct color to the Javanese Christian congregation he built.

The religiosity of Sadrach and his community demonstrates that for Javanese people, religion is not only about rituals and symbols but also about everyday life. They have a holistic approach to religion, which includes economic, educational, and environmental aspects. Sadrach and his congregation, who live off agricultural traditions, were educated through informal systems like apprenticeships to prepare them for village social life. As a leader, Sadrach also emphasized education and introduced a pesantren model for his congregation, as well as utilizing cooperatives and fundraising to assist community members. Since Sadrach's congregation was predominantly composed of abangan Muslim communities, tradition remained a significant part of their lives. Sadrach viewed tradition as a heritage to be respected and endeavored to integrate elements of abangan Islam with Christianity. He adopted several abangan Islamic practices, such as the paguron education system and the use of Islamic terminology for certain Christian concepts. For instance, the church built in Karangjasa adopted the Javanese mosque model, with a three-tiered roof symbolizing the Trinity, and a cakra replacing the crescent moon as the symbol of the power of the Gospel of God (Partonadi, 1988). This approach helped strengthen the Christian identity within the Javanese cultural context, leading Sadrach's congregation to be often referred to as "abangan" Javanese Christians.

Furthermore, Partonadi (1988) asserts that despite originating from a lower social class in Java, Sadrach managed to attain a position as the leader of thousands of rural people, marking his social ascent through the influence of Christianity. His awareness and attention to the emancipation of the indigenous community in general made a significant contribution within the context of 19th-century Java, demonstrating an example of struggle for social-political freedom without resorting to the violence or social-political protests common at that time. In his preaching, Sadrach emphasized Jesus Christ as the "just king" who inspired awareness and hope for the emancipation of the Javanese people. His popularity and high influence within the congregation constituted a form of political critique against the feudal and colonial societal structures of that era. However, Sadrach was more of a religious leader than a political one. Christianity at that time was often associated with the Netherlands as the colonial power, so Sadrach and his congregation had to maintain close ties with Javanese culture to counteract the negative perception of Christianity as a religion of colonialism. By maintaining a strong connection with Javanese culture, Sadrach and his congregation succeeded in bringing Christianity in a Javanese-influenced light, touching various aspects of community life such as economy, social, political, educational, and cultural. In their daily lives, they integrated sacred and secular aspects as well as behaviors related to religion, reflecting a harmonious relationship between religious life and the secular world in the Javanese context.

As for Sadrach's theology, it reflects a holistic approach also embraced by Javanese society in general, combining faith teachings and religious practices into an inseparable unity (Partonadi, 1988). Sadrach's life experiences as a Javanese person influenced his understanding of Jesus and the Gospel, which is reflected in the influence of Javanese and Islamic elements. Sadrach's background in the scholarly tradition affected his way of thinking, with a primary focus on the essence of life and efforts to achieve perfection. His education in the pesantren also influenced his

thinking and spirituality, with Islamic teachings emphasizing deeds and moral behavior. Additionally, Sadrach was influenced by a piestistic spirit that stressed personal piety and obedience to God's laws. Through his encounters with Jesus Christ and the Gospel, Sadrach's theology was constructed by viewing the Gospel as elevated and true knowledge acquired from Jesus as the exemplary teacher who died and rose again. Sadrach emphasized Christian ethics and obedience to the divine laws taught by Jesus, as well as following His example in everyday life. Sadrach's theology was developed within the Javanese context, emphasizing good deeds, piety, obedience, service, and the expulsion of demons as essential parts of Gospel teachings. Nevertheless, Sadrach consistently respected and acknowledged Jesus Christ as the Mediator and King of Truth in his preaching. As a local Javanese missionary, Sadrach provided authentic and obedient responses to Christ and His redemptive work.

Through Soetarman S. Partonadi's research on the ministry of Kyai Sadrach in the Javanese/Indonesian context above, it reinforces the influence of society on religion as well as the influence of religion on society.

In the views of Max Weber and Helmut Richard Niebuhr above, one can perceive how religion and society mutually influence and interact within complex dynamics. Weber highlights how the ethics of Protestantism, particularly among Calvinists, shape the social and economic structures that serve as the foundation for the development of modern capitalism. On the other hand, Niebuhr emphasizes the conflict between the teachings of Christ and human cultural values while acknowledging the complexity of their relationship. Weber's analysis underscores the significant role of religious teachings in driving the spirit of hard work, wealth accumulation, and economic rationality within society. Additionally, Niebuhr's perspective underscores how religion not only receives influence from society but also seeks to transform it according to the values of the kingdom of God.

Ultimately, the interaction between religion and society constitutes a complex dialectical process. Religion influences society through values, norms, and social identities, while society also influences religion through culture, customs, and social structures. With a deeper understanding of this dynamic, we can cultivate a harmonious relationship between religion and society, enabling them to enrich and strengthen each other in efforts to create an empowered and participatory society in social change. In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and Society 5.0 characterized by the dominance of digital technology and online platforms, the relevance of the thoughts of Max Weber and Richard Niebuhr remains significant. Weber, through the concept of Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism, presents a perspective on the relationship between religious values and economic development, which remains relevant in the current digital context where the spirit of hard work and economic rationality remain key drivers in the globally connected business world. Meanwhile, Weber's concepts of bureaucracy and rationality still aid in understanding how organizations and companies utilize technology to achieve their goals with maximum efficiency.

On the other hand, Niebuhr's thoughts on the interaction between religion and culture remain relevant in this digital era. In a society increasingly connected through digital technology,

understanding the complexity of the interaction between religious values and cultural reality becomes increasingly important. Ethical questions and moral dilemmas in the use of digital technology also come into focus, where Niebuhr's concepts of ethics and morality can provide valuable insights. Thus, the thoughts of Weber and Niebuhr continue to provide a strong foundation in understanding the social dynamics and values emerging in this digital era. Although the context has drastically changed, the concepts they put forward remain relevant and provide a valuable framework for analyzing the social and cultural changes occurring in an increasingly digitally connected society.

CONCLUSION

Through the examination of Max Weber's and Richard Niebuhr's thoughts on the interaction between religion and society, it is revealed that religion has a significant influence in shaping social, economic, and cultural dynamics. Weber emphasizes the role of religion, particularly the ethics of Protestantism, especially among Calvinists, in driving the advancement of modern capitalism. Meanwhile, Niebuhr highlights the complexity of the interaction between Christ's teachings and the cultural reality of human beings influenced by sin and weakness. As a complement to this topic, Peter Berger's study in his book "The Sacred Canopy" is intriguing, emphasizing that religion is a product of human social activity and plays a significant role in shaping and maintaining social structures. He describes religion as a "sacred canopy" that provides psychological protection for individuals and societies from the uncertainty and chaos of the world.

The analysis of the works of Weber and Niebuhr indicates that religious values not only shape societal norms and values but are also influenced by social, political, and economic factors. Conversely, religion also has the potential to alter social and cultural structures. All three provide insights into how the interaction between religion and society shapes complex social dynamics in modern societies.

It is important to acknowledge the mutual influence between religion and society. Therefore, further research is needed to understand this interaction and its impact on broader social change. A better understanding of this relationship can serve as a basis for efforts to improve social and cultural conditions in society.

Based on these conclusions, several recommendations can be made to develop understanding of the interaction between religion and society and address the challenges that arise. First, in-depth research into this interaction is needed, including analysis of the social, political, and economic contexts that influence it. Second, efforts are needed to strengthen interfaith and intergroup dialogue to promote mutual understanding and tolerance. Third, there is a need for the development of education and training programs for religious and community leaders. Fourth, support from governments and institutions is needed to promote religious freedom and pluralism. Fifth, it is important to strengthen the role of religious institutions as agents of positive social change. Finally, it is crucial to continue further research in this topic to deepen understanding of the complexity of the interaction between religion and society and its impact on broader social

change. Through continuous research, it is hoped that more effective solutions and strategies can be found to manage these dynamics for greater progress in society.

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