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## **Liberating Political Commitment Based on Democracy in General Election**

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### **Abstract**

The implementation of the General Election, including its implications for governance, has so far been full of various deviations from the principles of democracy. Therefore, with a theological perspective, democracy needs to be rebuilt to free society from democratic shifts in the Election and governance that have an impact on discomfort in living together. This article aims to construct a liberating political commitment of Christian society based on a dialogue between the ideas of democracy according to Karsadi and Franz Magnis-Suseno with the idea of the prophetic role of the church according to John Chr. Ruhlessin. The result of this study shows that a liberating political commitment can be built through the internalization of church teachings, so that the church is responsible for providing Christian political ethics education.

**Keywords:** contextual; political ethics; political theology; prophetic role; social justice

## INTRODUCTION

The General Election (GE) is a moment of democracy for the Indonesian nation. Indonesia has held GE regularly, since the first GE was held in 1955. Considering the importance of GE, efforts are made to prevent all forms of violations/criminal acts from carrying out GE that hinder the process of achieving GE's goals.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the main principle of the GE carried out is democracy. In a democratic country the people have a significant voice in the policies pursued by the state through its administration.<sup>2</sup>

In ensuring the smooth running of the GE process that actualizes the principles of democracy, the law plays an important role in providing full protection to voters from fear, danger, irregularities, and fraudulent practices that can occur either intentionally or unintentionally during the implementation of the GE.<sup>3</sup> However, according to the Chairman of Badan Pengawas Pemilihan Umum (Baswaslu) of Republic of

Indonesia (RI), quoted by Rama Agusta, the reality shows that GE's problems since the beginning of Indonesia's reform period until now have been the same.<sup>4</sup> When the time of GE arrives, national life becomes full of potential dangers, so the stakes are the quality of democracy and the existence of national integration.<sup>5</sup>

GE with a free electoral democratic style is useful for building national integration.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the elites are responsible for the political education process for the people, as well as improving the GE system and governance, besides improving the legal framework for GE and increasing the integrity of GE's organizers. The role of political elites in maintaining and spreading the substantive meaning of electoral democracy to the people must be placed above the interests of seizing power.<sup>7</sup> However, as explained by Agusta, Abhan emphasizes that the practices of politic of identity during GE still tend to inflame religious sentiment and produce polarization that undermines de-

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<sup>1</sup> Yuliani Widianingsih, "Demokrasi Dan Pemilu Di Indonesia: Suatu Tinjauan Dari Aspek Sejarah Dan Sosiologi Politik," *Jurnal Signal* 5, no. 2 (2017): 1–19.

<sup>2</sup> Yagus Triana H.S., Etika Khairina, and Mochammad Iqbal Fadhlurrohman, "Kajian Prinsip Demokrasi Dalam Pemilihan Umum Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Transformatif* 9, no. 1 (March 25, 2023): 66–83, <https://doi.org/10.21776/UB.TRANSFORMATIF.2023.009.01.4>.

<sup>3</sup> Widianingsih, "Demokrasi Dan Pemilu Di Indonesia: Suatu Tinjauan Dari Aspek Sejarah Dan Sosiologi Politik."

<sup>4</sup> Rama Agusta, "Permasalahan Pemilu Selalu Sama, Abhan: Taruhannya Kualitas Demokrasi," Badan Pengawas Pemilihan Umum, 2020, <https://bawaslu.go.id/id/berita/permasalahan-pemilu-selalu-sama-abhan-taruhannya-kualitas-demokrasi>.

<sup>5</sup> Agusta.

<sup>6</sup> Agusta.

<sup>7</sup> Agusta.

mocracy and threatens national unity and integrity.<sup>8</sup>

In such situation, political commitment that prioritizes justice, equality, and prosperity needs to be demonstrated in real terms.<sup>9</sup> Arie Sujito reveals that even though the policies that have been adopted so far have attempted in this direction, several cases show evidence that communities are colliding with each other and there is fragmentation of one another that is in fact not effective in addressing society's fundamental problems.<sup>10</sup> The reality is that distortions of freedom are actually used to attack the interests of other people without data and civilized values, that are reflected in hoaxes, hate speech, black propaganda, that tend to be negative beyond their rights to maintain personal autonomy and also risk the practical cracking of democratic rules and culture.<sup>11</sup> This is in line with A. A. Yewangoe's view that in Indonesia the issue of responsibility in political life seems to be getting no attention.<sup>12</sup> In fact, Christian political cadres, especially young people, are

now being overloaded with various sponsor messages.<sup>13</sup>

Then, R. Siti Zuhro also believes that democracy in Indonesia is still characterized by procedural things rather than substantive matters.<sup>14</sup> Apart from that, the certainty of the GE professionalism socially and politically feels distant with the presence of commotion and religious blasphemy, as well as the emergence of issues of intolerance and diversity that create conflict, disputes, and disagreements, as well as news that worsens the situation that appears endlessly,<sup>15</sup> besides money politic. Yewangoe emphasizes this that churches that have entered the realm of practical politics tend to lose their critical voice, when government officials deviate from the ethical and moral lines of power.<sup>16</sup> Apart from that, in the Presidential Election (PE) there were churches that openly asked their members to vote for certain candidates that also fostered partisanship with financial motivations and politic of sectarian in society.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Agusta.

<sup>9</sup> "Demokrasi Dan Ruang Politik Masyarakat Sipil," *Suara Bulaksumur*, 2022, <https://ugm.ac.id/id/berita/22962-demokrasi-dan-ruang-politik-masyarakat-sipil/>.

<sup>10</sup> "Demokrasi Dan Ruang Politik Masyarakat Sipil."

<sup>11</sup> "Demokrasi Dan Ruang Politik Masyarakat Sipil."

<sup>12</sup> A.A. Yewangoe, *Agama Dan Kerukunan* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2001), 166.

<sup>13</sup> Yewangoe.

<sup>14</sup> R Siti Zuhro, "Demokrasi Dan Pemilu Presiden 2019," *Jurnal Penelitian Politik* 16, no. 1 (June 28, 2019): 69–81, <https://doi.org/10.14203/JPP.V16I1.782>.

<sup>15</sup> Zuhro.

<sup>16</sup> A. A. Yewangoe, *Allah Mengizinkan Manusia Mengalami Diri-Nya: Pengalaman Dengan Allah Dalam Konteks Indonesia Yang Berpancasila* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2002), 246-47.

<sup>17</sup> Yewangoe.

There are several studies that have been carried out by experts regarding society's political commitment in GE that are based on democratic principles, as the dynamics have been explained above. With an international relations perspective, Farahdiba Rahma Bachtiar highlights the influence of foreign parties on democratic mechanisms, especially when GE is held in Indonesia, as well as Indonesia's own efforts to cover all components of society in maintaining its identity as a democratic country in the international realm.<sup>18</sup> With a political sociology perspective, R. Siti Zuhro examines the consolidation of democracy in the PE in 2019 that was needed, because the pillars of democracy were not strong that could be seen in the emergence of social unrest after the recapitulation of the PE was carried out by the Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU) to reject the winning candidate in the PE.<sup>19</sup> Then, with a legal perspective, Achmad Edi Subiyanto researches weak constitutional practices, the preparation of policies for implementing simultaneous GE, as well as the recruitment system for GE organizers and participants.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, with the pers-

pective of social, political, and cultural theology, Rasid Rachman and Rouli Retta Trifena Sinaga write about the development of social, political, and cultural theology in general from several theologians to show the importance of social, political, and cultural issues being responded to theologically.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, how to build the political commitment of Christian communities in particular, that prioritizes the quality of democracy in implementing GE for the integrity of society and nation theologically, is the focus of research in this article. The political commitment of the Indonesian people in the GE, that is offered here, is the concept of a liberating political role in upholding democracy. The concept of the liberating role of politics in upholding democracy can be an alternative for examining problematic GE dynamics in terms of implementing democracy both in terms of values and practices, in addition for seeking integration and prosperity of the nation as its implications.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This qualitative research article uses descriptive analysis with data collection

<sup>18</sup> Farahdiba Rahma Bachtiar, "Pemilu Indonesia: Kiblat Negara Demokrasi Dari Berbagai Representasi," *Jurnal Politik Profetik* 2, no. 1 (2014): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.24252/PROFETIK.V2I1A3>.

<sup>19</sup> Zuhro, "Demokrasi Dan Pemilu Presiden 2019."

<sup>20</sup> Achmad Edi Subiyanto, "Pemilihan Umum Serentak Yang Berintegritas Sebagai Pembaruan

Demokrasi Indonesia," *Jurnal Konstitusi* 17, no. 2 (August 19, 2020): 355–71, <https://doi.org/10.31078/JK1726>.

<sup>21</sup> Rasid Rachman and Rouli Retta Trifena Sinaga, "Teologi Sosial, Politik, Budaya," in *Teologi-Teologi Kontemporer*, ed. Jan S. Aritonang (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2018), 117–45.

techniques, namely literature studies from several experts' ideas, observations, and interviews. Observations are carried out to observe the subject of this research directly, especially regarding behaviors, interactions or complex situations, as they occur in actual situations.<sup>22</sup> Then, interviews are conducted to obtain information directly from the informants to construct, verify, and expand the required data.<sup>23</sup> Then, the aim of this research is to build a political theology based on Karsadi's idea and Franz Magnis-Suseno's idea about democracy, that are elaborated with John Chr. Ruhlessin's idea about the prophetic role of the church in upholding democracy, as a theological source for efforts to build a Christian society, especially in upholding democracy in Indonesia.

In this article the concepts of democracy, initiated by Karsadi and Magnis-Suseno, are explored first as a source of liberation. Then, the concept of democracy from Karsadi and Magnis-Suseno are elaborated with the concept of the prophetic role of the church in upholding liberating democracy from Ruhlessin. In the end, a liberating political commitment based on

democracy is proposed in order to uphold independence, justice, freedom, and unity in the context of holding GE in Indonesia.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Democracy

The understanding of democracy discussed in this section is based on the ideas of two figures. First, Karsadi's ideas that discusses democracy from the perspective of citizenship education. Second, Franz Magnis-Suseno's ideas, that discusses democracy from the perspective of political philosophy and ethics.

According to Karsadi, etymologically the word "democracy" comes from Greek, namely: *demos* (people) and *cratos/cratein* (government/power).<sup>24</sup> For Karsadi, democracy can be defined as government by the people, that the highest power is in the hands of the people and is exercised directly by them or by representatives they choose under a free, honest, and fair election system.<sup>25</sup> However, the concept of democracy is multidimensional, namely: (1) philosophically democracy as an idea, norm, and principle; (2) sociologically democracy

<sup>22</sup> Lexy J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2012), 174-75.

<sup>23</sup> Moleong, 186.

<sup>24</sup> Karsadi, *Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan Di Perguruan Tinggi: Membangkitkan Semangat Nasionalisme, Cinta Tanah Air, Dan Bela Negara Di*

*Kalangan Mahasiswa* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2022), 115.

<sup>25</sup> Karsadi, 118.

as a social system; also (3) psychologically democracy as the insight, attitude, and behavior of individuals in social life.<sup>26</sup>

In line with the Karsadi's view above, Magnis-Suseno states that democracy is legitimized by the assignment and agreement of citizens as their will are controlled.<sup>27</sup> The government remains under the control of the society either directly through the election of representatives or indirectly through open government, that can be called "representative democracy."<sup>28</sup> Through GE, citizens determine parties that will rule the country with confidence to support them, even though they cannot directly determine what decisions will be taken, so this becomes a limitation of popular sovereignty or what is called "total democracy."<sup>29</sup> Then, representative democracy provides sufficient space for experts with the parties to determine fundamental policies and directions, including presenting real alternatives for the benefit of society.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, at the same time government openness is an ethical demand, so that the government acts for and on behalf of the entire society.

Then, Magnis-Suseno also states that there is a political ethic that provides space for the limits of democratic rights, so that the majority of the people cannot make their will absolute in a dictatorial manner over minorities.<sup>31</sup> As social creatures, human beings are personally and communally obliged to respect other people and groups in their integrity and this integrity is expressed in the human rights they have, as well as demands for justice that are guaranteed constitutionally by democratic country.<sup>32</sup>

Magnis-Suseno's view above is in line with Karsadi's opinion regarding the three elements of democracy, namely: (1) sovereignty of the people/citizens; (2) political freedom of citizens; and (3) political and legal equality.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, Karsadi also emphasizes other pillars of democracy, that are developed by him from the ideas of Udin S. Winataputra. The pillars are: (1) Belief in the Almighty God; (2) division of state power; (3) regional autonomy; (4) social, economic, and political pluralism; and (5) the values of tolerance, pragmatism, cooperation, and consensus.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Karsadi, 117.

<sup>27</sup> Franz Magnis-Suseno, *Etika Politik: Prinsip Moral Dasar Kenegaraan Modern* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2018), 368-69.

<sup>28</sup> Magnis-Suseno, 370.

<sup>29</sup> Magnis-Suseno, 370-71, 374.

<sup>30</sup> Magnis-Suseno, 371.

<sup>31</sup> Magnis-Suseno, 374.

<sup>32</sup> Magnis-Suseno, 375.

<sup>33</sup> Karsadi, *Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan Di Perguruan Tinggi: Membangkitkan Semangat Nasionalisme, Cinta Tanah Air, Dan Bela Negara Di Kalangan Mahasiswa*, 119.

<sup>34</sup> Karsadi, 121.

On the one hand, the concept of democracy above is needed to protect the people from various forms of arbitrary power that are full of violence that result in suffering, domination, and discrimination. This is clearly visible in the ideas of Karsadi and Magnis-Suseno who emphasize political legitimacy in democracy that is responsible to God and humanity. On the other hand, Karsadi and Magnis-Suseno's ideas about democracy above do not yet show the diversity of democracy. Ujang Charda S. says that there are various terms associated with democracy, such as: social democracy, liberal democracy, people democracy, and guide democracy in various countries.<sup>35</sup> The implementation of democracy that is not the same between one country and another can be seen in various constitutions and state administration systems, such as: unitary state, federal state, republican state, and royal state.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, Charda emphasizes that Indonesia adheres to Pancasila democracy, namely the understanding of democracy that is based on the nation's view or philosophy of life, as well as a tool to achieve the nation's goals as formulated in the Preamble of the Undang-undang Dasar (UUD) 1945.

Then, the implementation of GE in Indonesia in the principle of democracy is to assess whether the ruling government is worthy of being supported again or should be replaced by adhering to the people's vote.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the practices of state administration that are still manipulative, also full of corruption, collusion, and nepotism, and the flare of money politic, cannot be continued, when the democratic party is held, so that this nation's democracy is not harmed and the interests of the people are not sacrificed.

### **The Prophetic Role of the Church in Upholding Democracy**

The view of Ruhlessin referred to in this section explains that the theological attitudes regarding the prophetic role of the church in politic that have developed so far can be divided into two. First, the dichotomous relationship between church and politics, because politic is considered as something that is dirty and cannot be approached by the church, and is not even a church issue.<sup>38</sup> Second, the relationship between church and politic is dialogical, because both entities have their respective authorities and cannot be disturbed but can be sought to lead to ethical and humanitarian interests,

<sup>35</sup> Ujang Charda, *Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan Untuk Pendidikan Tinggi* (Depok: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2019), 224.

<sup>36</sup> Charda.

<sup>37</sup> Charda, 228.

<sup>38</sup> John Chr. Ruhlessin, *Gereja Dan Kepemimpinan Publik (Pdt. John Ruhlessin: Sepuluh Tahun Menanam Dan Menyiram)* (Salatiga: Satya Wacana University Press, 2015), 335.

while politic is understood as the church's domain to contribute to the benefit of many people.<sup>39</sup>

However, regarding politic that is definitely the same as sin or full of sin, Robert P. Borrong says that destructive tendencies, especially manipulation and injustice in every political activity are realities, but politic is not identical with sin.<sup>40</sup> Then, regarding the prophetic attitudes of the church in politic, that are dialogical in nature, so far it can also be said to include two forms, namely the attitude of the church that is directly involved in various political practices of groups that have certain political interests, and the attitude of the church that does not take side with any group in practice.

What negative political reality does Ruhlessin mean? For Ruhlessin, politic is all praxis, because it comes into contact with power and there is nothing ideal about that power.<sup>41</sup> This is seen by Ruhlessin among other things in the GE processes that show patterns of procedural democracy that are full of subterfuge in Indonesia, such as the hijacking of democracy carried out by businessmen and rulers with money politic, in addition to putting up billboards, stickers,

banners, and business cards without being based in the society. As a result, people's aspirations are not represented. According to Ruhlessin, such democracy has exploited the sources of values, finance, ethnicity, tribe, and majority votes.

To respond to the reality above, Ruhlessin emphasizes the importance of substantial democracy with an ethical dimension, namely: independence, equality, justice, and freedom of society.<sup>42</sup> However, the implementation of substantial democracy also faces challenges, because the Indonesian people are not yet independent and are on the poverty line.<sup>43</sup> For example, people who live in small areas with a small number of people, such as in Maluku and North Maluku, but problematic and burdensome political processes exist there.

Therefore, the church plays an important role in providing ethical and moral perspectives on power, so that power is not used arbitrarily but serves the people, not oppresses the people.<sup>44</sup> In such dynamics, Ruhlessin emphasizes the importance of building public leadership that has principles, references, and common ground mora-

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<sup>39</sup> Ruhlessin, 336.

<sup>40</sup> Robert P. Borrong, *Etika Politik Kristen: Serba-Serbi Politik Praktis* (Jakarta: Unit Publikasi dan Informasi & Pusat Studi Etika Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Jakarta, 2006), 338.

<sup>41</sup> Ruhlessin, *Gereja Dan Kepemimpinan Publik (Pdt. John Ruhlessin: Sepuluh Tahun Menanam Dan Menyiram)*, 336.

<sup>42</sup> Ruhlessin.

<sup>43</sup> Ruhlessin.

<sup>44</sup> Ruhlessin, 336-37.



lity to be different from other people.<sup>45</sup> In addition, the church is responsible for enlightening the congregation about the power of ministry.

Ruhlessin sees the prophetic dimension of Jesus's work as a theological source for the establishment of substantial democracy. The prophetic dimension of Jesus' work lies in His alignment with humanity, that it is not in efforts to strengthen the power dimension of religious institutions.<sup>46</sup> Ruhlessin explains that Jesus' way of theology avoids establishment, but it is open to insight from God because of the power of the Holy Spirit.<sup>47</sup> The reason of Jesus' rejection of the Pharisees was not His agreement with the Torah, but the way of thinking of the Pharisees who viewed the position of faith they held as the basis for the legitimacy of the truth of what they said. Their loyalty to the Torah became a way to strengthen their religious institutions and the positions they held. In addition, they developed a code of holiness from the Torah to differentiate humans before God and humans' access to Him: Jews and Gentiles, the pious, citizens of the land, as well as sinners and tax collectors, that was discriminatory, primordial, and full of violence, that was

different from Jesus' liberative way. Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees began with the extent to that their ideas were functional in bringing liberation to humanity. For example, Jesus' teachings about the sermon on the mount, the story about the woman who committed adultery, and Jesus' attitude towards the people who were crucified with Him on Calvary show Jesus' partiality towards the humanity of those who do sin.

Thus, for Ruhlessin, the church's prophetic insight is not intended to encapsulate the political ideology of any nation, even though all of its aims are considered as noble and brilliant ideas.<sup>48</sup> The church's awareness of its calling is pursued by: (1) not starting from strengthening power, aggression, violence and politicization; and (2) starting from God's forgiveness and love.<sup>49</sup> Ruhlessin adds that the goals of church are different from the goals of being a state, such as falling into the temptation to become "part of the state" or expressing oneself as a state in another form, that the church can experience at a time, when the entire church process is positioned as a process to build power.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, Ruhlessin says that the ability of the church to live together with

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<sup>45</sup> Ruhlessin, 341.

<sup>46</sup> Ruhlessin, 344.

<sup>47</sup> Ruhlessin, 343.

<sup>48</sup> Ruhlessin, 345.

<sup>49</sup> Ruhlessin.

<sup>50</sup> Ruhlessin.

all who are being part of the world around it also determines the success or failure of the church in God's salvation.<sup>51</sup> This happens because the salvation that has been received by the church from God is salvation that is received because of the sacrifices that God makes for everyone, not just for the church. It will not be possible for the church to enjoy its safety and isolate itself amidst the destruction and devastation of the world around it. Therefore, the prophetic dimension of the church must be built on the basis of solidarity patterned by Jesus Christ, namely God who became man in the world, that should be the characteristic and life of the church.<sup>52</sup>

The church is called to think and do what is best for this nation as the embodiment of God's will, ready to make sacrifices for humanity, not having a hidden agenda from the agenda of the nation and state, and even convincing all components of the nation of its commitment to the future of the nation.<sup>53</sup> In the real practical order, the church is open and collaborates with all civil forces and the emancipation of all mankind that seeks peace, love, justice, and truth as a new order of life by making itself a credible church for everyone.<sup>54</sup>

Then, Ruhlessin reveals that the development of democracy, political emancipation of citizens, and strengthening public policies should be supported by the church as long as all of these things are aimed at building a new life that is peaceful, just, full of goodness, truth, pluralism, and equality in society.<sup>55</sup> Jesus was not political but did not deny the political consequences of the mission He carried out and realized how important it was for political power to be renewed through the prophetic attitude of the church, so that political life brings liberation for everyone.<sup>56</sup> However, for all of these things, the church must also be willing to seriously reject political power, so that the church's sermons are weighty and have a strong impact on efforts to elevate the dignity of human beings who are degraded and who are victims of worldly power politic, as well as for the welfare of many people.<sup>57</sup>

Ruhlessin's theological ideas above are in line with Borrong's views on the aims of church involvement in politics: (1) the aim of ministry/liberation for victims of political games by upholding human rights; (2) the missionary goal of witnessing to all mankind about the Kingdom of God that

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<sup>51</sup> Ruhlessin, 346.

<sup>52</sup> Ruhlessin.

<sup>53</sup> Ruhlessin, 348.

<sup>54</sup> Ruhlessin, 349-50.

<sup>55</sup> Ruhlessin, 350-51.

<sup>56</sup> Ruhlessin, 351.

<sup>57</sup> Ruhlessin, 351-52.

transcends human power and government; (3) the goal of correcting the sins of political leaders and the church itself is able to demonstrate good and righteous living; (4) the normative goal is that political power is directed towards realizing justice and love; and (5) educational goals in which the church plays a role in educating church members in fulfilling their calling in the world in the political arenas by providing political education.<sup>58</sup> Ruhlessin chooses a clear position to place the church's attitude in politics on prophetic principles and it is not the same as the role of the state, even though the church institutionally and functionally obeys God and the state as long as it is in harmony with God's will. Borrong calls this kind of relationship between church and state as a relationship of partnership or coordination or cooperation.<sup>59</sup>

Implicitly, Ruhlessin's ideas expressed above also emphasize the long term aspect of the prophetic role of the church in collaborating with various parties in upholding a policy based on a commitment to building a healthy democracy in accordance with the Christian faith while it is also being

in line with efforts to advance national life. If Saut Sirait's view is aligned with Ruhlessin's views above, then Christian political ethics are also processes of realizing God's will starting from the "political community" of a nation to relations between nations, namely the world as space and time.<sup>60</sup> Likewise, John W. de Gruchy states the same thing and explains that the relationship between Christianity and democracy for the sake of realizing justice in the world, that previously the Christian matrix of democracy had been taken away by the Enlightenment and the social movements that it gave birth to.<sup>61</sup>

de Gruchy adds that Human Rights that have an individual and social characters place human beings in a position to fulfill their duties and responsibilities, that is not just as a status to be in agreement with future generations.<sup>62</sup> de Gruchy bases his view on the concept of God who is powerful but not a monolithic, patriarchal power over the universe, that is far from history, relationships, struggles, and human sufferings. For de Gruchy, understanding being a person "in the image of God" is not intended to

<sup>58</sup> Borrong, *Etika Politik Kristen: Serba-Serbi Politik Praktis*, 5-7.

<sup>59</sup> Borrong, 28.

<sup>60</sup> Saut Sirait, *Politik Kristen Di Indonesia: Suatu Tinjauan Etis* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2006), 45.

<sup>61</sup> John W. de Gruchy, *Agama Kristen Dan Demokrasi: Suatu Teologi Bagi Tata Dunia Yang Adil* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2003), 242.

<sup>62</sup> de Gruchy, 256-59.

legitimize the pursuit of selfish interests either in the interest of the self-centred individualism of liberal democratic capitalism or the collectivity of communism.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, for de Gruchy, the implications of the principles of democracy cannot be ignored, namely: (1) respect for the human being and the call for liberation that is rooted in the human personality; also (2) awareness that life originates from and is supported by people living in families and communities or that true human fulfillment resides in relationships; also (3) the search for the good society as a whole.<sup>64</sup>

Thus, the prophetic role of the church in upholding democracy is not passive, such as through silence or indifference due to a narrow theological understanding and reluctance to come into contact with various risks resulting from consistent efforts to uphold democracy. The church is called by God to contribute actively to the transformation and strengthening of theological understanding as well as ethical, moral, and liberative ecclesiastical praxis based on the love of God, the example of Jesus Christ, and the inclusion of the Holy Spirit for the development of humanity, society, and the nation. By remaining unique with such a position, authority, and ministry, the church

can convince members of the congregation, society, and government as church partners to continuously work together in realizing shared noble ideals in a holistic manner through substantial democracy. A church that fulfills its prophetic role in this way has the power to be a source of inspiration as well as a driving force for the process of upholding democracy, that cares for the welfare of all levels of society and the government, for the Christian community in particular.

### **Liberating Political Commitment Based on Democracy**

A liberating political commitment based on democracy is initiated in this section as a response to the urgency of Christian community participation as part of the church and citizens who are responsible for national life in terms of holding GE. This liberating political commitment based on democracy is a form of involvement of members of the church and state that positions the people as sovereign and central in GE as well as its implications for government philosophically, sociologically, and psychologically. Apart from that, this commitment is also driven by the fear of God, the spirit of advancing a pluralistic society, and love of the homeland.

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<sup>63</sup> de Gruchy, 257.

<sup>64</sup> de Gruchy, 257-58.

Here there are four forms of Christian society political commitment that are liberating based on democracy as a calling task in the world. First, commitment to voicing common interests by becoming voters who give choices to people's representatives who are capable of fighting for life together without distinction. Through this political commitment the Christian society will not try to elect people's representatives who will only benefit certain groups, but also are willing to pay the price to seek multidimensional changes. The people's representatives who are being fought for are not those who use their position to enjoy various conveniences and alienate others, but are willing to control their power for universal destiny. The characteristic of such people's representatives can be traced through their track records of service in respecting the human rights of all people as well as fighting radicalism and abuse of power in a pluralistic society. In other words, when GE is held, the votes that the Christian society give for the people's representatives are based on the real experiences and lives that are as optimally beneficial to the public as possible. This kind of commitment of the Christian society shows a prophetic attitude of the church through its citizens who are responsible, and manifest nationalist and

patriotic consciousness, even though corrupt power remains a challenge.

Second, commitment to overseeing and making the implementations of success GE and government ethically, fairly, and by respecting applicable laws. By this political commitment, the Christian society is willing to use reason and be honest in upholding the GE and government process, both in terms of voting and taking sides with state ideology and policies aimed at general welfare. On the other hand, various political processes that are exploitative and intimidating towards the law-abiding constructive freedom space of society action for the public should be rejected. With this political commitment, the Christian society will not be naïve and counterproductive in responding to a ruling system that is contrary to the various needs of society. Then, here another principle is that Christian society is obliged to feel like they share the same fate in humiliation and suffering due to the lack political ethics. Even, the Christian society is also increasingly helping to ensure legal certainty by participating in realizing justice and overcoming various moral deviations in society, so that it becomes legal and constitutional.

Third, commitment to working together with various parties to protect all

components of the nation from various forms of arbitrariness of power in order to achieve the nation's noble ideas. Through this political commitment the Christian society is open to synergizing with all groups and inclusive in its efforts to create conducive conditions for implementing various state policies based on basic society approval. Then, a closed ideology that kills the nation's ideals, values, and philosophy of life can be rejected critically and objectively by the Christian society with the elites and the public. The universal human dignity that comes from God is reflected and fought for together with everyone. On the one hand, in this way the Christian society does not build walls separating itself from others in conducting theology and practicing it in the political realm. On the other hand, the self, society, government, and various institutions are seen as partners who support each other in the nation building procession.

Fourth, commitment to living up and implementing the church's preaching and struggle that can be trusted institutionally and functionally, that is in harmony with God's will, that also saves all of His creation across time and place in upholding democracy substantially in the implementation of GE, that the consequences of that are in a ruling government. Through this political commitment the Christian society see

the GE and ruling governance as important orientation to exert influence based on the Christian faith. The expansion of the Kingdom of God is not merely thought of dealing only with the distant concept of heaven, but rather is achieved through the proclamation of God's divinity, truth, and mandate that embraces the entire human community. Furthermore, the practice of Christian society regarding this commitment is pursued through liberative discourses and real attitudes that are centered on the example of Jesus. Christian society are not in positions to feeling right and judging, but freeing everyone from the destructive process of GE and government in struggling for life together.

The four political commitments of Christian society that are liberating based on democracy above are not impossible to achieve by synergizing the shared potential of all groups. This is the reality in Kecamatan Kairatu, Kabupaten Seram Bagian Barat (SBB), Maluku, Indonesia. The local Christian society appears to be making efforts to carrying out the GE until now, including running the government amidst various problems and challenges.

For example, S. M., Kepala Dusun Kairatu, SBB, and V. R., Christian, religious figure in Kairatu, say that the implementation of the GE in Kairatu is safe and there are no riots amidst the diversity of

the community.<sup>65</sup> According to Semmy, there are several important things related to the implementation of the GE in Kairatu, SBB, namely: (1) Kairatu City is a barometer or sample for the implementation of GE for people's representatives in SBB, so that in holding elections, especially GE, there are no violations and fraud, and the rules continue to be implemented; (2) the people are intellectuals and Christians, including they who live in mountainous areas and adhere strongly to their principles that are not easily bought with money, instead they continue to try to be "the light" and supportive.<sup>66</sup> However, Semmy also explains that during GE held in other regions, frauds generally occur and there is a kind of authoritarian power that manipulates the GE results, but there is never any legal handling of this.<sup>67</sup> In other words, during the GE period the murky situation could not completely force the attitude of the Christian community to follow the destructive political currents, full of manipulation, subterfuge, and violence that destroy the establishment of democracy.

In fact, even though the Christian community does not appear to contribute much in the preparation and implementa-

tion of GE's procedures, they are still willing to take part in determining their own choices, while maintaining a conducive atmosphere in Kairatu, their area of residence, SBB. This is in line with the statement of T. D., Head of Ketua Ranting Angkatan Muda Gereja Protestan Maluku (AMGPM), namely: "when the GE is held, there are rarely any problems at various polling places (Tempat Pemungutan Suara/TPS), but everything is running normally and under control."<sup>68</sup> Issues of ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup as well as voters' data have not been updated in the Daftar Pemilih Tetap (DPT) for the GE, as well as personal approaches, including money politic, during the campaign occurs, even though there is no spread of these issues that seriously bring down others, riots, and any level of conflicts.<sup>69</sup>

Then, E. W., a leader of society in Kairatu, confirms that in the recent elections, especially GE, in Kairatu various frauds are found at the top level related to the verification of prospective candidates, as well as data collection and reading of ballot papers, so that the distribution of witnesses with cross-party cooperation and the enforcement of GE's crimes against this fraud

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<sup>65</sup> S. M., Kepala Dusun Kairatu, Seram Bagian Barat (SBB), 23 September 2023; V. R., tokoh agama Kristen di Kairatu, SBB, 23 September 2023.

<sup>66</sup> S. M.

<sup>67</sup> S. M.; V. R.

<sup>68</sup> T. D., Ketua AMGPM di Kairatu, SBB, 23 September 2023.

<sup>69</sup> T. D.

attempted.<sup>70</sup> However, in Kairatu the voters are God-fearing, intelligent, open to candidates from outside the region as well as female candidates, and guard their identity militantly, so that money politic does not influence them.<sup>71</sup> This reality shows that the spiritual, intellectual, and emotional intelligence of the Christian society in Kairatu can be nurtured and also developed to transform problematic patterns in the implementation of GE and government related to the GE.

When Christian society fulfill its political commitment that is liberating based on democracy above, this does not mean that Christian society prioritize the interests of only Christian groups. Solidarity with sacrifice for the wider community across religions and multi-identities is also part of the equal civility and emancipation of the Christian community in upholding democracy in GE, which the implications of that are also in the administration of government.

Various primordial sentiments, polarization, destructive contestation, corruption, collusion, nepotism, money politic, and news that is muddy, full of blasphemy, and discrimination, including clashes and disputes that lead to the destruction of social

relations and national integrity are something that the Christian community rejects within its community as well in relations with all groups. This is relevant to Scott R. Paeth's views on the relationship between religious communities and global civil society. For Paeth, if forms of interreligious cooperation have begun on a small scale both with certain nation states and beyond certain nation states, that can be replicated and expanded, then the possibility of religious contributions to global civil society can also enable and promote transnational, transethnic and transreligious value systems that all religions identify it partially and completely.<sup>72</sup>

Thus, the political commitment of Christian society that is liberating based on democracy provides various spaces for conversation, mutual action, sharing experiences, meaningful relationships, that reconcile and encourage public participation that is integrated personally, communally, and systematically. Apart from that, this commitment optimizes the orientation and achievements of individuals, churches, communities, and government in building democratic life in Indonesia constructively in a better direc-

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<sup>70</sup> E. W., tokoh masyarakat di Kairatu, SBB, 23 September 2023.

<sup>71</sup> Edi.

<sup>72</sup> Scott R. Paeth, "Religious Communities and Global Civil Society: Moral Formation and Interreligious Cooperation in a Pluralistic Context,"

in *Public Theology for a Global Society: Essays in Honor of Max L. Stackhouse*, ed. Deirdre King Hainsworth and Scott R. Paeth (United Kingdom: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 158-73.



tion, especially in the implementation of GE and government. At the same time, the limitations and fragility of the power of all human efforts cannot be denied when hope for renewal in democracy continue to be nurtured amidst the gap between reality and expectations for a harmonious plural society in Indonesia.<sup>73</sup>

## CONCLUSION

A liberating political commitment of Christian society based on democracy is a calling task in the world to commit in voicing common interests of the success of General Election and governance. It is the commitment to work together with various parties to protect all components of the nation. Liberating political commitment is achieved by internalizing and implementing the church's preaching and struggle institutionally and functionally. Thus, the church should educate the congregation about the Christian ethics in politic.

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<sup>73</sup> Paeth.

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