

Preserving the Beauty of Lake Toba (Environmental of Contextual Theology)

Pahala Jannen Simanjuntak

ABSTRACT

As a member of the church in Indonesia, we are the part of God's people throughout the world. Together receiving the great commission as found in Matt. 28:16-20. In order to realize God's plan, namely the plan of peace through all of His creation. So, as Christians in Indonesia, they realize that they are God's ambassadors and make positive and constructive contributions as a result of their faith in Jesus Christ. No matter how small it is, it will be beneficial in life as a Christian as well as a citizen. In fact, society and the church are burdened and called to restore its beauty. For a long time, the previous parents have enjoyed its beauty until now. But it cannot be denied that Lake Toba currently needs the attention of Lake Toba lovers and even all people who have seen the beauty of Lake Toba long ago. The presence of contextual theology in Indonesia will provide a clearer understanding of the meaning of the Bible in everyday life. In fact, contextual theology has been applied in the lives of God's people from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

Keywords: lake toba, contextual theology, and God's ambassadors

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I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, attention to Lake Toba has increased considerably from various observers of Lake Toba. Several events to attract attention to Lake Toba have been carried out by various parties. On July 12, 2019, the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Ir. Joko Widodo set the

Lake Toba area and its surroundings to be a world concern. The five most priority destinations that receive attention in Indonesia are: Lake Toba, Borobudur Temple, Mandalika-Lombok, Labuhan Bajo and Likuang. Previously, the 209th Session of the Executive Board of

ENESCO in Paris, France, July 2, 2020, established the Toba Caldera as a UNESCO Global Geopark.

To realize this Lake Toba destination, the first step taken by the Government is to establish the Lake Toba Authority Management Agency (BDOT). Previously on June 1, 2011, there was a signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Indonesia and the Fellowship of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) as a joint commitment to the church to protect the environment.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

The presence of contextual theology in Indonesia will provide a clearer understanding of the meaning of the Bible in everyday of life. Even that contextual theology has been applied in the lives of God's people (Simanjuntak: 2021). The Book of Genesis records when God placed the first humans, namely Adam and Eve, in the garden of Eden. God gave life instructions that the first humans would obey (Gen. 2:16-17). But apparently they failed to understand God's intentions and plans that were spoken to them. Then they were rebuked and received punishment from God (Gen. 3:16-19). God gave them to live, repent and understand God's next will. Then in the election of the Israelites as God's nation as told in the book of Exodus, Moses taught Israel to obey God. Efforts to do theology contextually for God's people have been going on for a long time until now.

The term contextual theology has long been known in Indonesia, which was introduced by previous Indonesian theologians and even had Contextual theology since accepting Jesus as Savior (Simanjuntak, 2020). Therefore Contextual theology means understanding God's plan in accordance with the conditions and situations in which we are. In other words, we can mention the 'theological context' of Christians in Indonesia.

To make it easier for us to understand contextual theology, several

books on Contextual Theology help us understand and apply it in life. On the international stage, Anggie Pears (Anggie Pears 2010: 7) in her book *Doing Contextual Theology* tries to present models and methodologies with contextually theology and mentions a few names. A number of well-known Contextual theologians mentioned by Pears such as Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (2007), Stephen Bevan, *Models of Contextual Theology* (2002), James Woodward and Stephen Pattison, *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (2000), Sigurd Bergmann, *God in Context: A Survey of Contextual Theology* (2003) and other names working in contextual theology. All of their bright minds have opened themselves to theology contextual. Including Gustavo Gutierrez in his book *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* (1973). A Christian resistance against political violence, social injustice and status differences in Latin America. According to Anggie Pears, a contextual theology is presenting the Christian faith in any situation (Pears, 7-11).

In the Indonesian context, Indonesian theologians also try to invite us to understand contextual theology as well as apply it in everyday of life. The latest book edited by Jan S. Aritonang (2018: 1-5). Which is entitled *Contemporary Theologies* reminds us as well as interprets

contextual theology. Part of the book is contextual theology that can be applied in Indonesia. Although separately discussing contextual theology in the next chapter, such as Socio-Political-Cultural Theology, Contextual Theology and Pastoral Theology in the public sphere and other theologies that are appropriate in Indonesia.

Even before this book appeared, efforts to do theology contextually in Indonesia had already been raised by Eka Darmaputera with the title: *Menuju Teologia Kontekstual di Indonesia* (1989). Then followed other Indonesian theologians such as Anderas Yewangoe, Yongky Karman, Martinus Theodorus Mewene, Robert P. Borrong and other theologians. From their books and writings we can understand the direction and goals of contextual theology in Indonesia. So contextual theology in the lives of God's people is needed to kindle faith in the midst of a pluralistic world, especially in Indonesia. Starting from ourselves, family, other people's environment wherever we are.

III. DISCUSSION

God Created Everything is Good

The Bible has its own story about various lakes especially in the time of Jesus (Matt. 8:27; Mark 4:39, 41; Luke 5:1; 8:23, 33). The lake is part of God's creation that needs to be preserved. However, not all areas have lakes that can

be utilized and preserved like Lake Toba as we know it today. The beauty of Lake Toba that we have certainly reminds us of the beginning of God's creation who said that everything is good: In Hebrew said: *we hinne tov meod* (Gen. 1:10,25, 31)

There are quite a number of churches and Theological Colleges around the Lake Toba area. Of course you feel blessed by the presence of this beautiful and special lake. Because the majority of graduates from this Theological College will serve and serve around the Lake Toba area which includes 6 districts, namely North Tapanuli, Toba, Toba Samosir, Simalungun, Dairi and Karo. Indeed, the Theological College in the church is burdened and called to play a role in restoring its beauty. For a long time, previous parents have enjoyed its beauty until our time.

However, it cannot be denied that Lake Toba currently needs attention from Lake Toba lovers and even all people who have seen the beauty of Lake Toba long ago. So in restoring the beauty of Lake Toba, the Theological College together with the community and churches around the Lake Toba area have an important role. Inviting people from various tribes and religions to join hands to rebuild this Lake Toba tourist destination. Because in the Lake Toba area there are precious pearls that can be excavated. It's become icons and a historical site. College of Theology makes an important icon into research

material. For example the Tomb of Sisingamangaraja XII in Soposurung Balige-Toba. Batak Museum in Soposurung. Tomb of the Batak apostle I.L. Nommensen in Sigumpar and Head Office of HKBP Pearaja Tarutung and Cross of Love in Siatas Barita-Nort Tapanuli. Including Pusuk Buhit on Samosir Island which has its own history of the origin of the ancestors of the Batak people and the story of “Ompu Muljadi Nabolon (OMN). There are still many tourism icons, both natural and historical sites that can be used as spiritual tourism objects in the Lake Toba area

Tourism Icons

Currently, there are many important icons around the Lake Toba area. Unlike before, only Parapat, Tuktuk, Tomok are considered as tourist areas in the Lake Toba area. But now there are many places that have become tourist attractions in the Lake Toba area that need to be developed and built with adequate facilities and infrastructure. Take for example the view of Adian Nalambok Gurgur (Gurgur View), Pangkodian, Tarabunga, Meat in Tampahan sub-district, Toba district. Being a tourist place some people from various regions come to this place. Also Lumban Bulbul, Lumban Silintong in Balige sub-district, Lumban Binanga in Laguboti sub-district and four other places in 5 districts that are in contact with Lake Toba. There are many more tourist

attractions that can be developed. All of these can become important icons in the world of national tourism as well as tourism icons in other places outside North Sumatra.

In the past, at every 17 August celebration, Lake Toba was used as a place to compete with many activities. For example, the Solu Bolon (sampan rowing) competition, swimming, diving and other activities. Activities like this can be carried out again to recruit tourists and foster the talent of Bona Pasogit's sportsman to perform brilliantly in the national and international arena. Dance of Sigalegale in Tomok also attracts the attention of many people as well as introduces the rich culture, art and origins of the Batak people that need to be preserved. Then the government cooperated with the community to facilitate the return of the Lake Toba party as one of the grand arts and cultural events in this region. Of course there are many more that need to be addressed at this time to achieve a better future for the people around the Lake Toba area and the general public. It is also very important to maintain the beauty and cleanliness around the Lake Toba area which also needs to be taken seriously. Lake Toba should not be a dumping ground for garbage and dirty waste as well as plastic and used food and drink bottles.

But now how do we make efforts in this case the community, church leaders and the government to re-socialize the

preservation of Lake Toba to become an attractive destination as before.

A Nahum Situmorang legendary song: O Tao Toba

The legendary composer Nahum Situmorang (1908-1969) managed to get people's attention through a famous song with the title "Oh Tao Toba":

*O Tao Toba
Raja ni sude na tao
Tao na samurung na lumobi ulimi
Molo huida rupami sian na dao
Tudos tu intan do denggan jala uli*

The author's translation:

"Oh Lake Toba. King of all lakes. A lake that has a special beauty. If you look at your face from afar, it is like the most beautiful and precious diamond."

Such is the chorus (Ref) of the song entitled O Tao Toba, which was created decades ago and is now well-known in the wider community. This song is loved by everyone, especially the Toba Batak tribe, even outside this tribe. Not only sung in wine shops or coffee shops. However, it is more often sung in schools and on official national and international events, especially when there are cultural events. Since it was created, it has become one of the typical songs in the Batak song world in the North Sumatra area which has important historical value which is told in the song.

Through this song the composer reminds us that Lake Toba is a famous and beautiful lake that was once famous and its

beauty was enjoyed by previous generations or our parents. Maybe some of us still have time to see the beauty of this lake far from now. The question is: Is that what Lake Toba looks like today? Is Lake Toba that we love just a memory? Certainly not. Let's preserve and preserve its beauty the same as before.

Lake Toba As A Face of Indonesia and North Sumatra

Lake Toba is the face of North Sumatra in various ethnicities. Not all areas have lakes like those in North Sumatra. Therefore, Lake Toba is one of the faces of the province of North Sumatra and even in Indonesia in various ethnicities and regions. Since so long this lake is known both nationally and internationally. Not only rich in tourism but also rich in social, cultural and economic fields. The proof is in the area of Lake Toba, residents have lived for hundreds of years. They live in a calm, safe and secure place while enjoying the impact of the beauty of Lake Toba. Especially the Batak (Toba) people who are bound by the Dalihan Natolu (ADN) Indigenous philosophy live by loving and respecting each other (Somba marhulahula, manat mardongan tubu and elek marboru). Currently scattered in various parts of the world who are always proud to be said to have lived in the area around Lake Toba. This lake inspires and opens horizons to think about how to preserve God's creation and preserve the

environment. This means that the beauty of Lake Toba has a positive influence on everyone who has lived in the Lake Toba area. In agriculture, the Lake Toba area produces plants and plants that can be consumed by the wider community as narrated by the song O Tao Toba above:

“Haumana tung bolak, adaranna pe lomak di pangisi ni luatmi, pinahanna pe rarar Pandaraman pe bahat Nahumaliang topimi.” (Spacious fields, green pastures are available there, livestock are also plenty and livelihoods are available around you).

From a socio-economic point of view, the Lake Toba area is used for trading activities and selling community handicrafts (ulos, taganing, flutes, gondang sabangunan), agricultural products and trading various types of fish from Lake Toba. In terms of tourism, Lake Toba beautifies all the views and panoramas in the Lake Toba area. “Angka dolok na timbo do manghaliangi ho, O tao toba na uli, Tapianmu na tio, I tongtong di bahen ho dalan lao tu pulomi (hills and mountains) high surrounds you Lake Toba, rivers flow, clear springs, that is the way to your island).

So the presence of Lake Toba in the area which is inhabited by 5 districts in North Sumatra (North Tapanuli, Toba, Samosir, Simalungun, Karo and Dairi) has a very important meaning for economic growth, especially the tourism sector. Precisely with the existence of Lake Toba,

it makes the area around it beautiful, comfortable and makes residents feel at home and willing to invest in this area. Because it brings many blessings to many people.

Thus we interpret this lake as a gift from God not only to the people of North Sumatra but also to the people of Indonesia. By having its own unique and interesting myths and history to know, we believe that Allah gave this lake as part of the blessing of the Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth. So we are certainly grateful to God because there is Lake Toba which is an important icon that has a high selling value.

If we look to the past as a historical record, about 30 years ago I still remember that Lake Toba is a famous tourist attraction in North Sumatra and even in Indonesia. Many foreign tourists come to visit there. I still remember together with friends from my school, they went to Parapat and met with Caucasians (tourists) who came from various countries. Meeting with tourist while learning English immortalized through the famous kodak at that time. From Parapat continue the journey by boat to Tomok, Tuktuk and Simanindo and other places on the island of Samosir. If you have met while chatting with tourists, it becomes a story for friends at school. Especially for those who did not go to Parapat, they were very enthusiastic to hear the story of the trip. Even when schools program dharma tours, we always

choose Lake Toba as a tourist destination. Why? Because Dana Toba at that time had a story of its own beauty for us. And give special memories for everyone who comes there. So it is undeniable that the area of Lake Toba in the last twenty years has drastically decreased due to many factors. Of course, we don't need to bring up that factor and we'll see for ourselves, right?

The Role of The Churches and Theological College: Contextual Theology

In realizing this Lake Toba tourist destination, we start with two questions. First, what can we do now? One of our efforts is to create a destination for Lake Toba with national and international standards. Of course this program is not easy and easy. Not as easy as turning the palm of the hand. It takes process, time and involvement of all parties. In this case, especially the church and theological colleges in North Sumatra, cooperate with the government and the community based on a clear vision and mission. One of them is the formation of the Lake Toba Authority Implementing Body (BODT).

In this regard, the government through this agency tries to socialize and introduce the programs that are being developed and offered. The second question is, could this happen or is it just wishful thinking? The answer is possible! Seeing its history, Lake Toba has become an international tourist destination visited

by many tourists from various countries. They stayed for a long time in the Lake Toba area by staying in hotels and enjoying local entertainment and art and cultural performances that were available at that time. But it is impossible if all parties do not welcome and support this program and hope. But with optimism, we hope that Lake Toba can become a national and even international tourist destination, sooner or later it will.

So, since it was planned that the Lake Toba area becomes one of the tourist attractions with an international standard, we certainly welcome this effort and it is our shared responsibility. We are grateful for the government's attention to re-preserving the Lake Toba area. But it is not only the responsibility of the government, but all stakeholders and communities around Lake Toba. In this case, churches that have congregations living in this area must be burdened and called to make Lake Toba a tourist destination coveted by many people. Through the pulpit of the church, preachers need to also voice their concern for the beauty of Lake Toba.

Tourism Awareness Curriculum

Of course we welcome the government's efforts to make Lake Toba a tourist attraction that has a high competitive value. The Lake Toba area is considered very potential to attract foreign and domestic tourists to see the beauty of Lake Toba and its surroundings. Lake

Toba, which is famous for being beautiful and beautiful, should be an area that deserves to be used as a tourist attraction in North Sumatra in particular and Indonesia in general. Lake Toba is God's creation for us to enjoy. But we don't just enjoy it but maintain it and keep it well looked after. Therefore we should be grateful to God for the beauty of Lake Toba so that we also praise God. The role and participation of the congregation, especially the church members around the Lake Toba area, is one of the strengths in supporting this program. So that Lake Toba, which is a shared property, its beauty can be promoted to everyone. As a member of the church and the Theology College, we continue to carry out our own curriculum to invite people to join hands to be aware of this tourism.

Especially for members of the congregation around the Lake Toba area, they must really maintain the Lake Toba area so that it is well-maintained. Because this government program cannot be realized if the community does not welcome it well. Therefore, awareness (awareness of tourism) is needed together in making Lake Toba a tourist area and our common asset.

Hospitality

In addition, as a resident around the Lake Toba area, one thing that is very important in appreciating this grand plan is the hospitality of the people around the

Lake Toba area. Holding a motto: Guests are queens and kings. So every guest who comes must be welcomed and served well so that they feel comfortable, at home in this place. Isn't hospitality also a manifestation of our faith? This hospitality is applied in the form of behavior, attitude, honesty, speech and sympathy and love by the people around Lake Toba to everyone who visits this place.

As a creation and gift of God, Lake Toba is a legacy to us. From generation to generation must participate in maintaining and enjoying it. So how can this heritage be preserved, we are required to preserve it, keep the water clean and the fish can survive in it. Such as goldfish, catfish, 'mujahir' fish, cork fish, 'porapora' fish and others. If I remember correctly, around 1995-1996 General (Ret.) T. B. Silalahi, once sowed fish seeds in Lake Toba. It has been a long time since the people around Lake Toba have enjoyed the results. People around Lake Toba enjoy the delicious fish because it is rich in protein. So things like this need to be done by churches, foundations and people who care about Lake Toba. To re-breed the fish in Lake Toba so that in the future the types of fish in this lake can increase

Sense of belonging and sense of responsibility to Lake Toba

All of the above dreams will come true. The full attention of the church to the preservation of Lake Toba will make Lake

Toba even more beautiful. Everything we dream and talk about above without the prayers and support of all parties certainly cannot be realized. So the church, community and government including all theological colleges in North Sumatra join hands on how to make this Lake Toba destination a success. Compete to create a program with the aim of socializing and realizing Lake Toba as a tourist destination that is able to recruit both foreign and domestic tourists. Because in this way, life around Lake Toba will have a real influence on the progress of life that has been coveted.

IV. CONCLUSION

Communities around the Lake Toba area feel blessed by the presence of a beautiful and special lake. In the area of Lake Toba, precious pearls are embedded that can be dug up. It really becomes an icon and a historical site. Of course there are many more icons around the Lake Toba area as proof of the natural beauty created by God. All of that must be grateful for, maintained and preserved and passed on to future generations.

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