Urban Mission Strategy Through One-on-One Online Dialogue in Melbourne Australia

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Abstract
This paper reports the results of research on urban evangelism conducted online using a Zoom application with one-on-one techniques. The method is to conduct worldview talks with other religions in Melbourne, Australia. The dialogue refers to three key questions: (1) What is the worldview of your belief or religion? (2) Is there more to life than this? and (3) How does your belief or religion contribute to your life? The paper is presented in the form of descriptive reports. As a result, dialogue between religious people through a worldview approach in urban areas is effective as an effort to deepen the beliefs of others and introduce religious teachings embraced by other religions. The research contributes to the strategy of contemporary urban missions in the pandemic in the digital community. It provides new insights that evangelism can be done using technological devices in addition to the traditional way.

Keywords: Evangelism, Worldview, Interfaith Dialogue, Urban Mission, Digital Evangelization

Abstrak
Artikel ini melaporkan hasil penelitian penginjilan perkotaan yang dilakukan secara online menggunakan aplikasi zoom dengan teknik one-on-one. Caranya adalah dengan melakukan pembicaraan pandangannya dengan agama lain di kota Melbourne, Australia. Dialog mengacu pada tiga pertanyaan kunci: (1) Apa pandangan dunia tentang keyakinan atau agama Anda?, (2) Apakah hidup ini lebih dari ini?, dan (3) Bagaimana keyakinan atau agama Anda berkontribusi pada kehidupan Anda? Makalah disajikan dalam bentuk laporan deskriptif. Alhasil, dialog antar umat beragama melalui pendekatan pandangan dunia di perkotaan efektif sebagai upaya pendalaman keyakinan orang lain dan
memperkenalkan ajaran agama yang dianut agama lain. Penelitian berkontribusi pada strategi misi perkotaan kontemporer dalam pandemi di komunitas digital. Memberikan wawasan baru bahwa selain cara tradisional, penginjilan dapat dilakukan dengan menggunakan perangkat teknologi.

Kata-kata Kunci: Penginjilan, Pandangan Dunia, Dialog Antaragama, Misi Urban, Evangelisasi Digital

Introduction

Evangelism in urban communities involves many issues of pluralism as a challenge in building interfaith dialogue. The topic revolves around the strategy of introducing the gospel without intruding on the privacy of the religion of others on the one hand and efforts to maintain harmony in the community on the other. Cronshaw and Devenish have given an early foothold in the development of dialogue that pays attention to three things, namely exclusionism, inclusionism, and pluralism.\(^1\) But they realized, such an approach is problematic because each religion has different perspectives both viewed from the outside and from within the religion itself. Moreover, the empirical fact is that each religion has its worldview.

Dialogue about the worldview is not easy. Religious Christians will also fight hard against humanism as a powerful ism in contemporary society.\(^2\) Therefore, a strong mission effort must be built on the theology of pluralism.\(^3\) However, we think the clash of worldview is not an issue in mission practice, but an opportunity that can be reformulated through new means. This is important because the gospel news is introduced to urban urbanites surrounded by many values, secularism, and worldview differences.\(^4\) Moreover, the fact that urbanites today build their religious

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life in the atmosphere of the internet of things. This whole situation demands the presence of evangelistic practices and interfaith dialogue.

Through this paper, we offer a new approach to online interfaith dialogue with one-on-one conversation methods. The goal is to find out and explore the worldview of other religions in friendship conversations through selected respondents. The target respondents were two residents of the diaspora city of Melbourne, Australia. Melbourne is one of the cities inhabited by a multi-ethnic population, so it has a very diverse cultural disparity. Nevertheless, the city's inhabitants are known to have the highest level of harmony in the world. The religious composition of the population according to a 2016 survey is the majority of Christians (42.1%). While Islamic communities have 4.2% and Hinduism 2.9%. How can “the rest” be only 7.1%? What about the other 50%?

The theme of the dialogue is guided by three key questions: What is the worldview of your belief or religion? (Q1); Is there more to life than this? (Q2); and How does your belief or religion contribute to your life? (Q3). These questions will then develop in interactive dialogues conducted through the Zoom application tools. We recognize that finding people who live in a big city like Melbourne and are willing to have voluntary religious discussions is not an easy job. It takes an approach and prudence considering this is a sensitive and personal issue. The empirical fact is that these people are adherents of other religions. We assume that conventional dialogue patterns are an inappropriate step and should be reconstructed to be more contextual, Therefore building dialogue by utilizing digital media and internet platforms is the best choice. The inclusive criteria set out in the selection of dialogue partners are: non-Indonesian, non-Christian, academic (postgraduate) background, are of the same age range, are married, and live as residents of Melbourne. To maintain confidentiality, the first respondent is given code A, and the second is given code B. The second profile is as follows:

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6 City of Melbourne, “Multicultural Communities - City of Melbourne,” City of Melbourne.

Respondent A, male, between 35-44 years old, Muslim, Pakistani nationality. His highest level of education is doctoral. And he is Married with two children aged 7 and 5 years old. Respondent B was a male, between 35-44 years old, and a Hindu, from India. He has a master’s degree and is married without children.

The results of the dialogue are discussed using the content analysis method. Analysis content is a technique derived from the science of communication that aims to test the results of a communication process, recorded both in writing and recording audio and video, systematically. The analysis is also directed to obtain key factors from the respondent’s side that can be used as a contextual entrance to introduce the Christian faith through the conversation. Considering that the data used in this journal is qualitative, the presentation is done descriptively.

Theory

Evangelism is a preaching activity about Jesus Christ who died on the cross to atone for the sins of all mankind, was buried, and then rose from the dead. This concept expanded its emphasis in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 that Jesus provided a place for every believer into eternal life and carried the theme of salvation and the concept of the Kingdom of God. Furthermore, according to Packer evangelism is the act of communicating the news of God’s forgiveness to a sinful human being. In this case, Christians serve as the mouthpiece of God. Therefore, the act of gospel preaching needs to be held continuously and continually specifically to sustain the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ as it is written in Matt. 28:19-20: “Therefore, make disciples of all nations,

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9 Philipp Marying, “Qualitative Content Analysis,” in A Companion to Qualitative Research, ed. Uwe Flick, Ernst von Kardoff, and Ines Steinke (London: SAGE, 2004), 266.
and baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do all things which I command you. And know that I am with you always to the end of time.”

In times of change, the responsibility to carry out God’s commandments are not easy. According to Cronshaw and Devenish, the challenge of Christianity is to rediscover the necessity of mission through an innovative recalibration process that still refers to the gospel message as being conveyed to the apostles, and reflects the context of the ‘new’ culture in which the concept should be explained in the 21st century. Hunt sees that the church that is now emerging can indeed be considered an advanced Christian movement but not free from criticism. Churches have lost a sharp direction as happened in North America, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and other western countries. The Church stands only as a formal institution that cares only about Christians, defending doctrine and theology, but claims to have offered a new style of evangelism.

Interfaith dialogue is one of the best choices today, especially to tear down the walls of Christian exclusivism amid other facts of truth that exist outside the walls of the church. Through good and continuous dialogue tolerance can be formed which has an impact on the erosion of extreme religious attitudes and hatred. The willingness and openness to build dialogue will make the church proactive in culture, to meet its functional demands as the salt and light of the world. In the context of multicultural societies such as Australia, Michael said that awareness of the presence of culture can instead be an interfaith-framing dialogue. In other words, interfaith dialogue can be framed in the realm of cultural dialogue. An interfaith worldview can be introduced to each other and understood in the awareness of plurality.

Linking dialogue with the preaching of the Gospel in cultural framing was once used by Paul while in Areopagus. At that time Greece

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was the cultural center of the world. Paul opened a worldview dialogue with the city's inhabitants when he said, “Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, to the unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, he declares I unto you,” (Acts 17:22-23). It appears that Paul used a worldview approach through the cultural products of the Greek people to introduce the Christian faith. The altar to the unknown God became a frame for Paul to build dialogue and introduce a new gospel-based worldview.

Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias through his work ‘Searching for truth’ said that the worldview approach is a message delivery that emphasizes the search for factual truth and can be scientifically proven to be accepted by every religious person. This concept seeks to answer four questions in explaining a truth, namely origin, meaning, moral value/law (morality), and destiny. Zacharias emphasized that the four questions were tested with logical consistency, empirical adequacy, and experiential relevance. According to Zacharias, worldview is an underlying belief that forms all human thoughts and actions. This view is a philosophical spectacle used by one in looking at the world of ideas, experiences, and goals – an interpretive concept that explains why one sees things differently from others.

Method

This section describes chronologically the process of evangelism and witnessing to a Muslim and a Hindu who live in the city of Melbourne, Australia at different times online. The author uses the method of one-on-one interreligious dialogue and adopts a worldview into the three questions discussed in the dialogue. The dialogues are conducted in English. All dialogue discussions are translated into Indonesian, which is then packaged in the form of interactive dialogues.

To achieve the goal of proclaiming the Gospel and sharing the testimony of true Christian life with adherents of other religions, the author uses the method of one-to-one interreligious dialogue with a

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worldview approach. By applying this method, the writer has a golden opportunity to be able to explain the teachings of the Bible, witness the Christian life, and be listened to carefully by adherents of other religions. In addition to this, applying a worldview approach will encourage followers of other religions to get to know their religion/beliefs more deeply, increase their understanding of the religion/belief they adhere to, and consider the teachings of the Bible as the truth or the only truth.

To become a dynamic preacher, Senduk shared tips that are relevant to this research, namely: (i) after understanding the Bible, plant the truth in your heart so that your heart is aflame and able to convey God’s word, and (ii) to explain the truth, use it examples or parables from everyday life. These two things were adopted by the author in carrying out the method of one-on-one interreligious dialogue with adherents of other religions.

In the method of interfaith dialogue, both writers and followers of other religions are each allowed to present their views on their religion and beliefs based on mutual respect, without any debate or arguments to defend their opinions. Thus, this dialogue session provides an opportunity for adherents of other religions to listen to the author’s Christian life testimony and the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ which are the essence of the Christian life. The elements of this interfaith dialogue method are case studies and respondent profiles, dialogue topics, dialogue processes, and dialogue procedures.

Result and Discussion

The results of the development of dialogue based on three main questions to two respondents are presented as follows.

Question 1: What is the worldview of your belief or religion?

A respondent who is Muslim started the answer related to origin by presenting his views on life as a beautiful gift. In this concept life is a gift from God to be lived by everyone to fulfill a certain purpose. This is closely related to the purpose of human creation. About meaning, the respondent explained that he believed his life goal was to do good to others. The respondent viewed life as a test that will be rewarded by God. Destiny for the respondent’s life is God’s acceptance of all his good deeds so that one day he will become a “guest of God” in Heaven.
The second respondent who is Hindu began his presentation by asserting that Hinduism is not a religion but a way of life. In terms of origin, the second respondent strongly believes in creation through human life. Sanatana Dharma is a teaching that is essentially questioning the context of life, such as the purpose of life being for the good of the community and, more broadly, the world. Regarding morality issues, respondents adhered to the Upanishads scripture which tells the story of a child who has a dialogue with the god of death about the meaning of life. In terms of meaning, respondents argue that life must have a positive impact on the community, society, and the world. This is because every human being has a dharma or duty to the purpose of life. Dharma is the benchmark to live as the highest moral value.

After both exposures, we explained the concept of Christianity which refers to the same topic. Origin is explained through the events of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. In this explanation, we introduce the concept of the trinity as an integrated part of the concept of human creation about Jesus’ mission in the world as a savior. Regarding meaning a true Christian is to become a follower of Jesus Christ by denying himself, carrying the cross, and living in His laws. In terms of morality, we propose the concept of love as a moral foothold guided by two things at once, namely loving God and loving fellow human beings. Both concepts must be executed simultaneously. As for destiny, we convey that in Christianity there is a concept of forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ. Everyone who lives in Jesus Christ will come to eternal life.

**Question 2: Is there more to life than this?**

The Islamic respondent answered Question 2 with “Yes” because life is a place where we continue to learn to correct our mistakes. According to him, everyone carries out different life goals with others, and every day, we learn something new such as finding the direction of life, patience, and feeling the suffering of others and others. The respondent argues that what is missing today is the application of learning from life and trying to do good. Having a religion or belief makes his life calmer because he can pray to God and leave all the problems of life to Him.
In comparison, the Hindu respondents answered the question through association with destiny (Question 1) that there are similarities between the teachings of Sanatana Dharma and the Book of Revelation, especially in terms of the trial of the wicked and the four horsemen on the Day of Resurrection. According to the respondent, everyone has their destiny by living morally during his life. The respondent added that moral degradation would lead a person to condemnation on the Day of Resurrection. So, according to him, the purpose of our lives is to know that there is a purpose in this life. The respondent raised the term system thinking in life, where every action we do, good and bad, can affect or transmit to our living system, society, and the world. Regarding origin, the respondent added that this life is believed to be the result of the creation of Vishnu.

After both exposures, we explained the Christian concept of the existence of something “above” human life today. The Christian view of origin through the creation of life is fundamentally unrecognized by non-Christians, especially atheists. The world was created as an ideal realm but changed drastically after the fall of man in sin. We affirm that Christians are required to do good, love their fellow human beings, and are no longer self-centered or self-oriented but willing to sacrifice for others. By implementing a system of thinking as described by the Hindu respondent, we explain that everyone should pay attention to the impact of their actions on the world. Good deeds and caring must always be pursued continuously by everyone in the world for the life of mankind to be better.

**Question 3: How does your belief or religion contribute to your life?**

The Islamic respondent expressed his views by asserting that Islam helped him to find his origin and explaining the reason “why he lives in this world.” The purpose of his life is to live happily in this world and, according to him, it is not difficult to be happy. The Respondent's view is that life is a beautiful gift from God that must be lived in a happy atmosphere. Respondent argues that his religion teaches that God is always there when we feel alone. Religious teachers and religious leaders must be good-behaved people and set an example for their people. According to him, they must follow the prophet Moses whose life was simple and easy to forgive. Similarly, when praying, the respondent
asserts that one must be humble before the Lord and should not pray in a state of anger toward one another.

The Hindu respondent answered with one word: *structure*, in the sense that religion or belief gives structure to life. With the structure of religion or belief, one’s life will be more pleasant and organized than living without religion or belief. Life will be easier because people know what is good since religion or belief provides a structure and a framework of rules so that its adherents know what to do. Man knows which is good, because religion or belief gives *reason* about goodness and why it should be done. According to the respondent, religion should be able to internalize good teachings to every human being.

We express our views on the same topic by saying that religion or belief not only provides a structure or doctrinal framework for life but also produces good experiences as a result of the correct application of gospel doctrine in everyday life. Through true life experience, man learns little by little to correct shortcomings to prove that the doctrine of the gospel is a truth that can be used as a way of life. As long as religious teachings or beliefs have a good impact on his life, then a Christian is considered to have an impact. It is also explained that the center of Christianity rests on the person of Jesus Christ who is part of the Trinity. Jesus became God’s instrument to save the whole world. Only by believing in Him is human life guaranteed in eternity.

The Hindu respondent added that religious teachings or beliefs are a *moral guiding force* or a moral guiding force that can guide one’s way of life to achieve happiness and peace. According to respondents, people who do not believe or are atheists easily encounter a dead end and easily get lost when experiencing severe problems in their lives. This is because atheists have no clear purpose in life and do not understand why they live.

In response, the author acknowledges that in Christianity there is the highest moral value of love. It is the primary law that Jesus Christ teaches all mankind. Man was created in the image and likeness of God, therefore, man is required to love God with all his heart, soul, and mind, and to love his neighbor as himself. Killing is not permissible because it is the same as killing the image of God in one another.

Based on the results of the dialogue we managed to conclude. Answering Question 1, we have had the opportunity to preach the gospel
of the Lord Jesus Christ to both respondents and present the core teachings of Christianity through an approach of origin, meaning, morality, and destiny. Regarding origin, respondents and authors agree on the creation process. We convey the essence of the Christian life centered (meaning) on the person of Jesus Christ who said, 'I am the way and the truth and the life'. Included in the presentation are several important concepts such as the Trinity, the validity of the gospel, being a follower of Christ (meaning), the law of love (morality), forgiveness of sins, and eternal life (destiny) through Jesus Christ.

About Question 2, Is there more to life than this? both respondents answered “Yes” and explained that every human being should continue to learn and try to do good because this determines the destiny of where people will go after death. We agree with this opinion but emphasize that all good deeds must be in terms of loving others sincerely, willing to sacrifice without demanding retribution and not being self-centered. Answering Question 3 How does your belief or religion contribute to your life? the respondents explained that their religion or beliefs provide the purpose of life and the structure and order of life in such a way as to make their lives good and happy. However, we think that the purpose of life and happiness in Christianity is not the same as the concept that exists in the world. Religion is the way. The decision to go down that path lies with the adherents. That is why in Christianity, being a follower of Jesus is not just a personal confession but includes the demands to practice all Christian teachings in daily life. Being a doer of the word is an expression of the way of life that leads to happiness.

By paying attention to the verbal language of the respondents during the dialogue, there is a sense of respect and tolerance from both the Islamic and Hindu respondents. Thus, it can be concluded that friendly discussions as an online one-on-one interfaith dialogue can be developed in urban pluralist societies. The coercion of religious teachings and truths is not visible because the discussion is directed at worldview dialogue for the purpose of understanding other religious beliefs and explaining their own religious beliefs.

Conclusion

Interfaith dialogue can be the best option for understanding other religions and introducing one’s religion to adherents of other religions. In
In the Australian context, one-on-one dialogue like this proves that faith and religious beliefs can be shared online by utilizing a variety of existing applications. Emphasizing and developing dialogue by adopting a worldview and contextualization approach can create a peaceful and appropriate atmosphere for the sake of gospel socialization.

We found that the worldview approach (origin, morality, meaning, and destiny) in question 1 What is the worldview of your belief or religion? as the opening topic of dialogue has allowed the respondent to express his personal views about the religion or beliefs he or she adheres to without comparing with other religions or beliefs. In this case, respondents can freely share their beliefs according to the level of faith and understanding of their religion or beliefs. We recommend the following three things as recommendations for contemporary urban mission action in the contextual mission theological frame when choosing to take the same approach as this study.

First, the credibility of respondents determines the results and quality of evangelism. Since the approach taken is the excavation of the worldview then it requires some respondents who are rich in understanding and strong and mature in their religion. We recognize that this method has its drawbacks if applied to immature respondents in religion or practice radical understanding. This imposed will cause debate and dead-lock or dead ends. Second, prepare the right time and place for the implementation of a conducive, calming, and comfortable dialogue so that respondents are free to express their views without any sense of haste or pressure. Guaranteed availability of time in the dialogue is very important. Third, the evangelist needs to be sensitive and ready to present the gospel, the doctrine of Christ about the worldview, the Christian faith, and the true life experience with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, especially when the respondent presents his religious teachings or beliefs that are very different from the teachings of Christ.

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