PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
THEOLOGY, RELIGION, CULTURE, AND HUMANITIES
Volume 1, Issue 2, December 2024 (378-396)

Religion, Justice and Women: The Views of Dominican Christian Mystics Meister Eckhart and Franciscan Bonaventura

Agustinus Dwi Handono[a], Falenrius Nderi[b], Is Bryan Bowo Pangestu[c,1]
Johanes Berchmans Heru Prakosa[d]
[a,b,c,d] *Pontifical Theology Faculty of Wedabhakti*

[1] Corresponding email: isbryanbp@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.24071/tic.v1i1.8774

Abstract

Mysticism was an interesting and fascinating phenomenon in medieval times. In that century, the scientific interest and views on mysticism that experienced high intensity, especially in its literature, also became a challenge from both religious and epistemological sides. This is not surprising, since visionary stories reflecting transcendental experiences associated with forms of religious spirituality could not be understood by (modern) rationality. Even today, rationalism and empiricism are popular for determining justice that materializes from development and knowledge in a measurable way. This also creates a dilemma, where the orientation of rationalism and empiricism emphasizes results rather than the relationship between humans and the Divine. The views of Christian mystics Meister Eckhart and Bonaventure provide an overview of the relationship between mysticism and social life. This article discusses the views of Dominican mystic Meister Eckhart and Franciscan mystic Bonaventure on religion, justice and women. These two Christian mystics emphasize the dimensions of human unity with God, the position of human beings, and human relations. At a time when the development of rationalism and empiricism is massive, mystical experience becomes one of the alternative views to revisit the relationship between humans that comes from unity with the Divine in the perspective of Religion, Justice and Women. This scientific work is studied using the literature method.

Keywords

Mystical Theology, Religion, Justice, Women.

INTRODUCTION

The times have progressed significantly, especially through science and technology. *The* rationalist idea of *cogito ergo sum* (I think, therefore I exist) pioneered by Descartes has marked modernist thought. This anthropocentric school of thought led to major changes, especially in science and technology. At the same time, the development of technology and science has increasingly influenced human orientation in utilizing existing resources. After all, this progress is a great blessing.

However, the undeniable negative impact is that individuality, pragmatism, and exploitation are increasing. In this article, the author will present Mystical Theology in the thought of Franciscan Meister Eckhart and Dominican Bonaventure. The thoughts of these two Christian mystics offer divine encounters in mystical experiences as a reflection to see the contribution of Christian faith. Moreover, the mystical path offered by Meister Eckhart and Bonaventure emphasizes human relations with God and others. Through this mystical path, the author will explore the thoughts of the two Christian mystics with a focus on issues of religion, liberation and justice, and women. The emphasis on the issues of religion, liberation and justice, and women is a response to the challenges of the times in the perspective of mystical theology.

WRITING METHOD

This paper uses the literature research method. The author tries to collect, evaluate, and synthesize information from various sources; books, journals, and scientific articles. The main source used in this paper is the book "Three Mystics Walk into a Tavern: A Once and Future Meeting of Rumi, Meister Eckhart, and Moses de León in Medieval Venice" by James C. Harrington and Sidney G. Berger.

The paper begins by formulating the main focus, asking questions, gathering sources, and collecting the necessary data. After that, the author relates it to the context of today's thinking.

The author raises the theme of the views of the mystics Meister Eckhart and Bonaventure related to Religion, Justice, and Women. In the Indonesian context, mystical thought is very much attached to the spiritual and religious life of the community. With this library method, this article can provide a new view that enriches the spiritual life of the community, specifically related to Religion, Justice and Women in mystical thought.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Mysticism

The term or expression *mystic* (Greek, *mystikos*) is basically always associated with a secretive attitude. The term mystic is usually used to refer to matters of the divine nature. Mysticism is understood as the experience of human openness to divine reality, which is interpreted by humans in a unique form of participation in

God. In traditional usage, the word mystic is often associated with irrational or supernatural aspects to bring it closer to the divine rather than human nature. The word mystic, which is not used in Scripture, was introduced in the Platonic Christian literature of the Alexandrian School. In the New Testament, the term mystic is associated with the word mystery (Greek - μυστήριον, *mysterion*) which is used to express the human experience of the saving God.[1]

The term *mysticism* is absorbed from the English *mysticism* or the expression *mystic*. In Greek, μυστικός (*mystikos*), μύστης (*mustēs*), meaning secret, mystical, and related to mysterious things as a derivative of *mystes* "initiated person". Under the influence of Greek philosophy and culture, the word was absorbed into various languages. French, for example, uses the term mystique (mysterious or mysterious), Latin *mysticus* refers to the mystical side of secret rituals, and Italian and Spanish both use the term *mistico*. The adjective mystic in common usage is associated with mystery religious ceremonies, ceremonies that must be kept secret, as well as to denote things related to the knowledge of mysteries. In Europe itself, the term *mysticism was* used to describe the spiritual practice of church monks in *purifying* their souls from *darkness*, although later it was also used in the spiritual practice of Jews and other religions.[2] Thus the word mysticism implies something mysterious, which cannot be achieved by ordinary means or by intellectual effort, mystery and mysticism are indeed derived from the Greek word *myein*, "to close the eyes".

The Church in the Middle Ages

The Middle Ages is one of the three main periods in the longest scheme used in the study of European History, namely the Classical or Ancient Age, the Middle Ages, and the Modern Age.[3] In medieval times, the Church had a huge influence on the outside world, especially in Europe. The Catholic Church is an institution that has strong political and religious authority, thus influencing various aspects of people's lives. The Church played an important role in controlling people's social behavior, influenced the education system, and had involvement in political and government affairs. In addition, the Church also played a role in the development of art,

[1] Eduard Salvatore da Silva, Eddy Kristiyanto, Meister Eckhart: Pandangan Teologisnya, JURNAL TEOLOGI, 09.01 (2020): 27 – 48.

[2] William B. Parsons (Ed.), *Teaching Mysticism*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2011, 27-29.

[3] Nico Syukur Dister. Psikologi Agama, *Tentang Segi Insani Iman dan Agama. Dasar dan Sikap Hidup Beragama*. (Yogyakarta. Kanisius. 2021). 32.

architecture and technology, such as the construction of cathedrals and castles that advanced building technology.[4]

In the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church's concept of truth was based on the authority and teachings of the church as the primary source of truth. The church had strong control over European society at that time, and people's social behavior was controlled and regulated by the church. The power of the church was dominant, and the teachings of the church were regarded as absolute truths that should not be questioned. This resulted in restrictions on the development of science and philosophy, as well as a ban on the study of religion/theology that did not comply with church regulations. The Medieval Church's concept of truth is based on a belief in God's authority and revelation through church teachings, which must be accepted blindly by the people. The church in medieval times was the center of spiritual, social, and cultural life in Europe. The Roman Catholic Church had great power in politics, education and religion at that time. feudal system had a strong influence on the structure of the Church.

The concept of truth lies in the institution of the Church. The distinctiveness of medieval theology lies in the intrinsic nature of the original culture on which theology is based, namely the culture of Christian faith itself (*respublica christiana*). The core of medieval theology was the mysteriousness of God himself. The mystery of the self-revealed God is approached, studied, classified and explored in the light of faith and truth (ratio). The internal aspect of the renewal of theology in this century is found in the concept of "theology" itself, its method and epistemological status.

Indeed, at that time the actions of the Church were so shackling human life that humans no longer had the freedom to think. Even the scholars at that time did not have freedom of thought. If there were thoughts that contradicted the teachings of the church, the person who expressed them would be severely punished. The Church forbade investigations into religion because they believed that there was no better truth than revelation from God.[5] The Middle Ages was a time of domination by the

[4] Ninik Haryanti. GEREJA PADA ABAD PERTENGAHAN HINGGA MASA PERTIKAIANANTARA GEREJA DENGAN PEMERINTAH. https://www.academia.edu/33474256/Gereja_Pada_Abad_Pertengahan_Hingga_Masa_pertikaian_dengan_Pemerintah

[5] Augustinus Gereja vs Filsafat: Pergolakan Abad Pertengahan. https://www.kompasiana.com/amelia80752/63a1958e4addee629c478ed2/gereja-vs-filsafat-pergolakan-abad-pertengahan

Church, whose aim was to guide people towards a godly life. However, on the other hand, this domination of the Church was without regard for the dignity and freedom of human beings who have feelings, thoughts, desires, and ideals to determine their own future.

Meister Eckhart was a German mystic who had mystical struggles with the order, with the Church, and with himself. Eckhart was a Catholic theologian who was a priest of the Dominican order. However, due to his controversial mystical views, he was accused of teaching heresy and was put on trial by the Catholic Church. Eckhart also had his own struggles with himself, where he sought a direct experience with God through the practice of meditation and prayer. But despite the conflict with the Church, Eckhart still maintained his views on mysticism and emphasized the importance of mystical experience in people's lives.

Meister Eckhart was punished by the Roman Catholic Church for allegedly spreading heretical teachings through preaching. His controversial teachings included a controversial mystical view, in which he claimed that when humans reach the highest level of consciousness, humans become so close to God that they are indistinguishable from God. Therefore, although Eckhart's teachings have been influential in Christian mysticism, some of them were considered controversial by the Roman Catholic Church of his time.

Eckhart's Dominican Mystical Struggle

Meister Eckhart, born in Thuringia, Germany in 1260 and died on January 28, 1328 in Avignon, France. He is known as a philosopher-theologian of the Dominican Order (*Ordo Predicatorum*) as well as a spiritual writer who is said to be Germany's greatest "speculative mystic". Eckhart spent much of his time working as a teacher and preacher.[6] In a number of his works written in German and Latin, he also formulated a discourse on "mystical unity", the birth of the divine Word in the human soul. At the age of eighteen, Eckhart joined the Dominican Order and pursued his studies (philosophy and theology) in Cologne, Germany, under the guidance of the renowned Scholastic theologian Albertus the Great. As a Dominican, Eckhart's thought is also inseparable from the influence of Thomas Aquinas.[7]

[6] Julia A. Lamm, *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Christian Mysticism,* USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2013, 341.

[7] Eduard Salvatore da Silva, Eddy Kristiyanto, Meister Eckhart: Pandangan Teologisnya, 27 – 48.

Eckhart was ordained a priest in 1293 and then assigned as Dominican Vicar of Erfurt, Thuringia (Germany, 1294). Before and after this assignment, he taught Theology at the University of St. Jacques, Paris where he also received the title of Master/Meister (1302) after commenting on the work of Petrus Lombardus (*The Sentences* - the main text of the Middle Ages that was a prerequisite in the study of theology at that time). From then on, Eckhart was known as Meister/Master Eckhart as a prestigious title for a very famous theology teacher at the University of Paris.[8] Meister Eckhart served as the first Provincial of the new Dominican province of Saxony (which covered the Netherlands to Livonia in the Baltic, including Thuringia, Germany), Vicar of Bohemia (the Czech region and beyond in 1306 until 1311) as well as founding several new communities (sisters). In 1311, Eckhart was again appointed provincial of Teutonia (Freiburg, Germany) and continued his professional career in theology. Eckhart also became a teacher and spiritual director for the Dominican and Beguine sisters as a form of contemplative life for lay women in Strasbourg and Cologne).[9]

Eckhart ended his days in the papal court of Avignon defending himself against charges of heresy, which were leveled against him starting in 1325. His thought caused controversy and was considered heresy by the Church authorities. Nonetheless his immediate Dominican followers, namely Henry Suso and John Tauler, explained some of his teachings and qualified them. Eckhart rejected the excessive bodily asceticism practiced by many in the Middle Ages. Eckhart always favored internal self-denial as the primary means of transformation of the soul. Through ethical, material, and psychological renunciation of everything, including the idea of self, man realizes being created "in the image of God," as in traditional Christian thought. However, the soul is not created, it is the image of God.[10]

Contents of Eckhart's Thought

About Religion

Eckhart realized that the greatest longing of man is the union of the soul with God, so man's knowledge of God and his relationship with the world is indispensable.

[8] Julia A. Lamm, The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Christian Mysticism, 341.

[9] Julia A. Lamm, The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Christian Mysticism, 341.

[10] Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman, *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 103

For Eckhart, the knowledge of God taught by the Church was not enough for people who longed for salvation. Every human being also needs to seek personal understanding in building a relationship with God. Therefore, Eckhart "went further" than what other mystics, such as Hugo St. Victor, did. He (the supreme) must be independent (not structured as a particular "God" by any party) (Eduard Salvatore da Silva, Eddy Kristiyanto,).[11] Eckhart expressed some of his criticisms of hierarchy. A hierarchy that prefers the establishment of official teachings. Church authorities do not tolerate teachings that deviate from the formalized and established teachings. The hierarchy is too strong and tied to political power. Courts or inquisitors were used as political tools to defeat rivals.

The mission of religion is to bring people to unity with the divine. Religion is supposed to bring people closer to the divine. But Eckhart saw a concern in Christianity. In Eckhart's view, Christianity is more preoccupied with bureaucratic issues, more focused on strengthening institutions, and there are even many political interests in it. Especially before the separation of religion and state. The church, which is a religious institution, also intervened in political and government affairs. The mixing of power between power as a Church institution and a state institution actually brought the Church down because of disputes between state authorities and Church authorities. As a result, religion does not bring people to the depth of the mystery of salvation.

However, Eckhart also did not deny that religious traditions, practices and teachings can help people to find unity with God. As he puts it, religious traditions, practices and teachings can also be a means of helping people to be more in touch with God.

> "I also believe that a religious tradition, with its rites, practices, teaching, and culture can be immeasurably important, and perhaps critical, in helping individuals break with their personal fetters and find union with God.". [12] Religious traditions are the basis on which people can move and lead to union with the divine.

[11] Eduard Salvatore da Silva, Eddy Kristiyanto, Meister Eckhart: Pandangan Teologisnya, 34.

[12] James C. Harrington and Sidney G. Hall III, *Three Mystics Walk into a Tavern,* (United States of America: Hamilton Books, 2015), 24

Rituals are very important to Christians. Christianity has many ritual practices. Some are formal or celebratory rites, but others are personal, informal, observable in everyday life. Because we believe in Jesus, God incarnate, we see and find the experience of the incarnation in the celebration that the One through ritual is present among us in different ways. Many mystics have grown up with religious traditions, even when faced with opposition. They can use familiar mythic structures to communicate the spiritual journey to others. Cultural background can also encourage others to the divine.

Man cannot comprehend God as a whole, he can only understand him in terms of the concept of God's glory. Any word used to refer to "God" cannot fully describe His greatness. Man cannot understand God just by the title given to Him. This is because God is an Essence that transcends form. The language used by humans is unable to define the glory and sacredness of God. An example is in explaining the concept of the Trinity. Whatever the description, the Trinity must basically be interpreted as the total unity, the eternal immortality of God that cannot be fully understood by humans.

Religious traditions can help one to personally develop mystical practices, such as entering into contemplation. It is good to signify a sacred space where one consciously enters and is fulfilled. Another example would be the personal ritual practice of taking a mantra word to help stay focused and reoriented when there are distractions. Eckhart himself found the candlelight and words of praise spoken at the beginning of meditation very helpful, and when blowing out the candles at the end of meditation there was gratitude. Sometimes one uses a rosary to recite a prayer that is repeated over and over again to stay focused and avoid distractions during leisure time or in the course of daily routines.

Eckhart did not place much emphasis on whether or not one uses one's religious traditions for mystical practice. According to Eckhart if one develops one's own personal ritual practices such as contemplation, or chanting a single word mantra, or using a rosary to stay focused on saying prayers, it is very helpful. what is important in traveling the mystical path is the support of the community. One's relationship with the Divine requires support from within the community. If the community provides strong support, then one's connection with the divine is also stronger.

On Justice

Meister Eckhart's idea of justice in the context of spiritual mysticism emphasizes a model of integration between contemplative and active life. For Echart a deep spiritual life is essential in the struggle for justice. For him Christian spirituality guides individuals not only to seek inner harmony but also to engage in the struggle for justice.[13] Spirituality is not only for self-interest but contributes to social justice. Spirituality should be able to strengthen the struggle for justice.

Justice can be realized through integrating the active and contemplative life. Not separating or creating a dichotomy between the two. Echart opposes the traditional view that places the contemplative life above the active life. For her, both aspects are complementary and necessary for spiritual well-being and justice in society. It is interesting that, in redefining this understanding, she draws on the story of Mary and Martha in the Gospel of Luke 10:38-42. Through his reinterpretation of the story of Martha and Mary, Eckhart shows that deep spiritual life and active service are inseparable.[14]

For Echart the struggle for justice must be based on a deep connection with the Divine. Mystical experiences, he argues, provide the strength and orientation to act for justice. This idea is reiterated by Thomas Merton, that social activities without spirituality tend to drain quickly, wasting energy. [15] Every act of justice is a manifestation of a relationship with God.[16] Spirituality should be linked to social and political endeavors, striving for justice as part of the contemplation of spiritual experience.

Mysticism is often seen as an intense and personal religious experience. Yet mysticism offers an alternative path for self-understanding and transformation of self and society. Mysticism can play a role in responding to oppression and contributing to the creation of justice. It cannot be denied that experiences of oppression, experiences of injustice make people run away from the world and seek mystical experiences, uniting themselves with God.[17] This is because mysticism offers a space where individuals can experience union with the Divine, which can provide strength

[13] Harrington and Hall III, *Three Mystics Walk into a Tavern,* 36.

[14] Syafa'atun Almirzanah, "Contemplation and Action: Christian and Islamic Spirituality in Dialogue", dalam OASIS, HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies, 2023, 5-6.

[15] Harrington and Hall III, *Three Mystics Walk into a Tavern,* 36.

[16] Harrington and Hall III, *Three Mystics Walk into a Tavern,* 38.

[17] Harrington and Hall III, *Three Mystics Walk into a Tavern,* 44.

in overcoming their experiences of oppression. Mysticism serves as an aid for individuals to overcome the pain and alienation caused by oppression, injustice in society.

Echart understands that mystical experiences often inspire people to engage in social action to create a more just society. Through union with the Divine, individuals gain a broader perspective on humanity and justice. Mysticism not only provides spiritual solutions to oppression but also motivates social transformation. Mysticism can make a concrete impact through acts of love. Mysticism is a self-discovery of God and the other side is helping those in need.[18] This action is performed by those who experience mystical union with the Divine. The mystery of the Incarnation provides the realization that God is not separate from human experience, including in the experience of suffering that each person experiences.[19] Through mystical experiences, individuals can find the strength to overcome oppression and become agents of change in society. Mysticism, then, is not only introspective but also has revolutionary potential, encouraging the transformation of self and society towards greater justice.

Eckhart's views on women

Eckhart did not talk much about women. Eckhart's ideas about women can be seen in his views that honor female mystics, such as the Beguines. Eckhart was concerned about the culture of Abrahamic religions, especially the Church, which overemphasized patriarchy. The Church has always put men before women. As a result, women tend to be ignored and given less space to express themselves. For example, the presence of female mystics in the Church Tradition was initially underappreciated and tended to be suppressed by the Church hierarchy. Although in practice, many women have played a major role in the renewal of spiritual life and contributed to the development of the Church.

In the beginning, the role of women was often underestimated by Church authorities. It was not uncommon for female figures who tried to live out evangelical values deeply to be challenged from within the Church authorities. For example, as experienced by the Beguine group. The Beguine women live together in community, live evangelical values devoutly, live poor, simple, and do social work serving the poor.

[18] Susan Rakoczy, *Great Mystics and Social Justice: Walking on the Two Feet of Love*, (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2006), 26.

[19] Harrington and Hall III, *Three Mystics Walk into a Tavern,* 46.

Their way of life was in stark contrast to that of the Church hierarchy at that time. The Church hierarchy displayed a luxurious, comfortable, and powerful lifestyle. Whereas the Beguines lived very simply, building a deep relationship with God and living a pious life. The Church hierarchy views this way of life as incompatible with the official teachings of the Church. Because in the view of the Church, everyone who wants to build a personal relationship with God must go through the intercession of the Church hierarchy. Finally, Church leaders use power to demonstrate their leadership authority. People who teach differently from what the Church authorities teach are considered heretics and the Church authorities have the right to impose punishment. It took a long time for the Church to recognize and make a place for women.

Eckhart brought up a very famous Beguine figure, Marguerite Porete (1310), whose existence at that time was considered alarming to the Church authorities. Marguerite Porete was a highly respected Beguine mystic. She had a following among the faithful, and this made the Church leaders especially the clergy uneasy. Marguerite Porete's life story ended tragically as she was executed by inquisitors and her work *The Mirror of Simple Souls* was destroyed as it was considered a heresy. One of Marguerite Porete's teachings that disturbed Christian theologians was that human virtue does not bring man into union with God. Marguerite realized that union with God can happen if humans truly surrender themselves to God. This surrender to God can happen because God works within man. Thus, man cannot rely on his own strength. Meanwhile, according to the view of the Church hierarchy, it is man's own actions that bring man to union with God.

Bonaventura

Around the same time, Bonaventure (1221-1274) was a Franciscan who continued the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi. Bonaventure became a Franciscan in 1243. He was a brilliant philosopher and theologian. Bonaventura became General Minister of the Franciscan order and was later appointed bishop and cardinal. During his lifetime, Bonaventure's works were not only philosophically and theologically rich, but he was also a mystic. His spiritual writings that describe mystical experiences are the *itenerarium Mentis In Deum* (or Journey of the Soul towards God).[20] The *Itenerarium* describes the stages of the journey leading up to the mystical experience.

[20] Robert Glenn Davis, "Hierarchy and Excess in Bonaventure's Itinerarium mentis in Deum", *The Journal of Religion* , Vol. 95, No. 4 (October 2015), 433-453

By looking at Bonaventure's thoughts and mystical experiences, the author will juxtapose the thoughts of the two mystics in the same era on religion, liberation and justice, and women.

Bonaventure's Thought

About Religion

As a theologian, Bonaventure did not discuss religion directly as an institution. Bonaventure emphasized more on how a believer can build faith in his life to get closer to God. Therefore, Bonaventure offers his thoughts on the *Itenerarium* to God. *Itenerarium* for Bonaventure has a theolgical-spiritual content. Itenerarium is a reflection on mystical theology through the seraphic vision of Francis, which at the same time is a vision and manifestation of Christ's passion.[21] For Bonaventure, the journey of the soul is a stage that leads to inner peace. This stage is described as the six wings that also envelop the seraphim, as an image of the true contemplator who is raised from earthly things and illuminated by divine wisdom.[22]

There are two understandings of the *Itenerarium of* Saint Bonaventure. The first thing that is emphasized in the *Itenerarium of* Saint Bonaventure is the status of man in God. Man as a creation of God is a creation that has a close relationship with God. This close relationship with God must be maintained by every human being. Although human beings have fallen into sin, which has damaged the relationship between God and human beings, the existence of human beings as God's good creation cannot be completely destroyed. Humans still have the opportunity to improve their relationship with God.[23]

The second thing that is emphasized in the *Itenerarium of* Saint Bonaventure is the aspect of "exodus" from the human side. Exodus or walking out means that humans who have lived in this world with all the materials that affect them are invited to return to God. Humans should not bind themselves with materials that damage their relationship with God. Relationship with God is a virtue in religious life.[24]

[21] Davis, *Hierarchy and Excess*, 433

[22] Ray C. Pietry, *Late Medieval Mysticism*, (Kentucky, USA: Westminster John Knox Press), 2006, 138

[23] Andreas B. Atawolo, *Hasrat Allah Akan Jiwa Manusia Belajar dari Teologi St. Bonaventura*, (Jakarta: Obor), 2017,42.

[24] Atawolo, *Hasrat Allah Akan Jiwa*, 42.

The two important meanings of Saint Bonaventure's *Itenerarium are* then realized into four aspects of life that can guide a person towards a life closer to God. The *first* aspect is Prayer to the Source of Light. St. Bonaventure invites all believers to be diligent in prayer. By taking time to pray, one is reminded of God's eternal power. Praying reminds man that every good gift and every gift of life received by man always comes from God. Understanding that every good thing received by man is obtained from the goodness of God will keep man away from being arrogant and selfish. The *second* aspect is Intention and Longing. Humans who have lived in the world must open their hearts to receive joy from God. The joy that humans strive for is not only to fight for peace (*pacem*), but inner peace (*pacem spritus*). Inner peace is peace that encourages one's soul to live in God. Living in God is a divine light that can keep people away from the darkness of sin. Inner peace is a gift of God that wants to save man. Therefore, humans must open their hearts to receive the gift of joy from God.[25]

The *third* aspect is the concept of Christ the Great Wisdom. Bonaventure believed in Christ as the way of salvation. Jesus Christ is the expression of God's perfect love for Man. Christ is the truth or *veritas of* God the Father, which can be believed in as a concrete manifestation of God's love for man. Man must be personally aware of God's grace. Prayer and contemplation is one of the means that man can pursue to realize the grace given by God to man. The *fourth* aspect is to remove the barrier. This means that man must build and truly trust in God. Bonaventure argues that the humility that humans strive for is not just an intellectual speculation. Humility is an expression of faith to live in God. The presence of God in the human soul is far more important than prioritizing thoughts that are only centered on ephemeral earthly possessions.[26]

On Justice

Bonaventure says that justice is the attitude of giving to each person what is due to him. Justice is not only determined by a leader, but also presupposes that every citizen is "sahaja or humble, and works diligently" to realize the praxis of justice. Justice is an entity that every human being can strive for. Each person cannot only receive justice from the legal system. Justice already exists within each person, therefore, each person is obliged to fight for justice within themselves.

[25] Atawolo, *Hasrat Allah Akan Jiwa*, 18.
[26] Atawolo, *Hasrat Allah Akan Jiwa*, 20.

Specifically, Saint Bonaventure emphasized political justice. Political justice emphasizes the importance of justice as an integral part of political leadership, as well as the involvement of all citizens in realizing the praxis of justice. Political justice must also seek justice for society, especially in the use of the earth's wealth.[27] Therefore, there are four points that one must carry out in striving for just politics.

First, possess the political virtues. A leader must have prudence. That prudence must manifest in words. The words that have been expressed by a leader must be manifested in daily actions. The words that have been spoken by the leader become a benchmark in the actions that must be taken. By having prudence a leader is not rash in making a decision. Prudence involves the human and intellectual side. In the end, Bonaventure calls for human wisdom to be in accordance with divine wisdom that prioritizes justice for all His creations.[28]

Second, leaders should have strength (*fortitudinis*). The strength in question is resilience in the face of all kinds of threats. The toughness in fighting refers to the sense of security possessed by a person. A sense of security is a basic human need. A leader should provide and be able to guarantee a sense of security to every human person.

Third, modesty (*temperantiae*). A leader must know how to put himself as a person who leads and he is able to lead his members. A good leader is a leader who prioritizes the common interest over his personal interest. This does not mean that a leader does not have his personal rights as a free man. However, by restraining personal desires, a leader is not wrong in making a decision. It is this concept that makes St. Bonaventure identify the notion of justice with "giving to each person what is his right".[29]

Fourth, Justice (iustitiae). The ultimate goal of politics is justice. Politics is a moral law that creates justice for all its members. All rules, values and norms called for in politics basically depart from human life that must be considered. Therefore, what should be fought for in politics is the welfare of all its members. Politics is not

[27] Andreas B. Atawolo OFM, Ciri Pemimpin Politik Menurut St. Bonaventura, dalam Cristus Medium, diakses melalui https://christusmedium.com/2018/10/ciri-sikap-pemimpin-politik-menurut-st-bonaventura/

[28] Atawolo, *Hasrat Allah Akan Jiwa*, 63.

[29] Andreas B. Atawolo OFM, Ciri Pemimpin Politik Menurut St. Bonaventura, dalam Cristus Medium, diakses melalui https://christusmedium.com/2018/10/ciri-sikap-pemimpin-politik-menurut-st-bonaventura/

present to prioritize the needs of a particular individual or group, politics should be concerned with the welfare of all members.[30]

About Women

Bonaventure's thoughts on the role of women in the church were expressed in a writing known as *De perfectione vitae ad sorores.*[31] The writing can be interpreted as "The Perfection of the Sisters' Lives", this writing was addressed to Isabela who was the daughter of King Louis VIII. Isabela was a sister of the Damiasnites in Longchamp, which is near Paris.[32]

This writing addressed to the Clare sisters contained religious perfection that could be applied by the Clare sisters. In a situation where the church at that time still emphasized the hierarchical system and political church life, Saint Bonaventure called for the path of perfection for the Clarist sisters. The path of perfection can be achieved through, True self-knowledge, True humility, Perfect poverty, Silence and love of silence, Craft of prayer, Remembrance of the sufferings of Christ, Perfect love of God, and Perseverance to the end (Alex Lanur OFM, 2022). By prioritizing and living the eight paths to perfection offered by Bonaventure, the Clare sisters who symbolize women can contribute their role to church life. In the end, Bonaventura argues that men and women who are equal in the eyes of God have the same rights in proclaiming the teachings of the church. Thus Bonaventure strongly approves and supports women also playing a role in church life with their respective roles and functions.

Relevance of Eckhart and Bonaventure's Thought in the 21st Century

The 21st century is faced with increasingly complex and sometimes confusing social, political and spiritual issues. In the midst of this situation, the existence of the mystical world has never been eliminated from the civilization of the times. In Indonesia itself, we find that things that blend mystical "horror" become something interesting. The world of Indonesian television continues to raise the mystical things of Indonesia. Mysticism is not something that is far from human life, but it really exists in real human life.[33] In a broader understanding, mysticism does not only talk about

[30] Atawolo, *Hasrat Allah Akan Jiwa*, 33

[31] Alex Lanur, Perihan Kesempurnaan Hidup Wejangan Untuk Saudari Saudari Dina, (Jakarta: Obor), 2022.

[32] Alex Lanur, Santo Bonaventura Uraian Tentang Kesempurnaan Hidup, Manuskrip Persaudaraan OFM Provinsi Indonesia, 1984, 1-3.

[33] Yulius C. Neong, "Narasi Mistis" dalam *CANDELA*, Vol.17, No 1, (Juli-Desember 2019), 6.

things that are horror, spooky and scary. Mysticism goes far beyond that. The uncertain situation in this century has led people to seek tranquility. There are many ways for people to "escape" from the situation of this world. Meditation practices, the back-to-nature movement, yoga, *healing in* quiet places confirm that mysticism is still very relevant today. In a more spiritual language, people today are again seeking union with God. In this context, the thoughts of Eckhart and Bonaventure provide valuable insights in explaining and guiding the search for mystical experience in this complex world.

Eckhart's mysticism emphasizes the importance of personal struggle with oneself in seeking a direct experience with God.[34] In the midst of technological advancements and modern busyness, the need for self-awareness and inner peace is increasingly felt. The practice of meditation and prayer is a means to achieve this. In their anxiety and busyness individuals seek mystical experiences to gain inner peace and a clearer direction in life. In addition, amidst the plurality of religions and diverse worldviews individuals seek a deep understanding of their own God. This concept is relevant to the spiritual challenges faced by individuals in their search for meaning and purpose in life amidst the confusion of the modern world.

It is inevitable that in the 21st century, social injustice and inequality have become a major concern. This situation has given birth to groups that fight for justice. In general, those who have a deep understanding of spirituality and connection with the Divine tend to be involved in social movements to fight for justice and equality.[35] This is in line with what Eckhart said that mystical experiences often inspire people to engage in social action to create a more just society. Mysticism as a social experience seeks to change the social structures that cause poverty, injustice and suffering.[36] Those who have experienced union with God strive to free their fellow man from the shackles created by the present situation.

Not only social institutions, sometimes religion also brings division. Many people use religion as a tool to oppress others. In religion mystics are often used

[34] Petrus Pit Duka Karwayu, "Elia Si Mistikus", dalam *CANDELA*, Vol.17, No 1, (Juli-Desember 2019), 14.

[35] Firman Panjaitan, "Teologi Mistik sebagai Jalan Kehidupan: Membangun Teologi Mistik Kontekstual Indonesia Melalui Perbandingan Pengalaman Mistik Paulus dalam II Kor. 12:1-10 dengan Pengalaman Mistik Bima dalam Kisah Dewa Ruci", 97.

[36] Harrington and Hall, *Three Mystic Walk into A Tavern*, 38

through metaphysical terms.[37] They then seek new avenues of spirituality in order to find peace of mind. It is no wonder that many people personally leave religion, because they do not find peace in it. It is even more disconcerting as Echart says that the interference of religious institutions in political and governmental affairs has a harmful effect on justice in society. The mixing of religion and politics creates chaos in the public sphere. Echart's ideas lead people to mystical experiences that can guide individuals in their search for meaning and purpose in life. Experiencing unity with the Divine in their life struggles.

In line with Echart's thoughts, Bonaventure also invites the need for a mystical experience, where the soul is directed towards God. The journey of the soul towards God is a stage that leads people to inner peace. Although in the course of this journey man sometimes commits sins that separate him from God, God still loves man. Humans are still God's creation. God gives people the opportunity to constantly improve their relationship with God. Bonaventure also offers a model of life that is not tied to worldly things. This is a correction for people living today who tend to glorify their own creations. Man falls into worshiping other gods that are the creation of his own hands. Bonaventure's mystical view corrects the lifestyle of people today. He invites in the midst of the turmoil of this age, a good relationship with God, the search for God becomes a path full of joy.[38] This relationship can be established through prayer, striving for inner joy or peace, contemplating God's grace through Jesus Christ, and placing our hope in God.[39]

Another important contribution of Bonaventure is his idea of political justice. He prescribes the characteristics that a leader must possess in order to realize justice, manage the wealth of the earth and how to mobilize the people to practice justice. Ideally, then, a leader should possess political virtues, be resilient in the face of challenges, know his place, and always strive for the general welfare.[40]

In the context of the plurality of the Indonesian nation, the author sees that there are similarities in the characteristics of the nation, namely the spiritual life of its people. In Indonesia, there are six recognized religions: Islam, Protestant

[37] Muzairi, "Dimensi Pengalaman Mistik (*Mystical Experience*) dan Ciri-cirinya", *Religi* Vo. X, No.1 2014, 53

[38] Sahjan M. Akhasan, *Epistemologi Mistis,* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Jivaloka, 2022), 112.

[39] Atawolo, *Hasrat Allah Akan Jiwa*, 18.

[40] Andreas B. Atawolo, Ciri Pemimpin Politik Menurut St. Bonaventura, dalam Cristus Medium, diakses melalui https://christusmedium.com/2018/10/ciri-sikap-pemimpin-politik-menurut-st-bonaventura/

Christianism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. The spirituality of each religion provides important value for the lives of its adherents. The goal is an eternal happy life.

The thoughts of Eckhart and Bonaventure provide insight into how the deep connection between human beings and the divine should extend to communal life. When a mystic loves his Creator, he is able to understand how his Creator loves each of His creations. From this spiritual and mystical life of man flows justice for all creation.

The thoughts of the mystics Eckhart and Bonaventure open spiritual horizons in the context of religion in Indonesia. Religious life balanced with spiritual depth should lead to justice and equality. Thus, religion as an institution is expected to lead to the depth of spirituality and the role of its adherents as a mystical experience. This mystical experience becomes spirituality in seeking justice for all people.

CONCLUSION

The thoughts of Meister Eckhart and Bonaventure approach issues of religion, justice and women through mystical experience. The thoughts of Meister Eckhart and Bonaventure provide an understanding that the closer one is to the Divine, the closer one's thoughts, reflections and virtues are to their original source. As a religious institution, mystical experience is needed for its leaders and followers. With mystical experience, religious institutions are open to justice and equality as recognized through union with the Divine. Thus, union with the Divine in the mystical experience of Christianity as well as other religions further leads a believer to be able to be just and to regard someone as a neighbor.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Akhasan, S. M. (2022). Epistemologi Mistis. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Jivaloka.

Amelia Zulfiani, Gereja vs Filsafat: Pergolakan Abad Pertengahan. Diakses di https://www.kompasiana.com/amelia80752/63a1958e4addee629c478ed2/gereja-vs-filsafat-pergolakan-abad-pertengahan Pada tanggal 01 Februari 2024, Pukul 12.30

Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman. (2012). *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Atawolo, A. B. OFM. (2017). Hasrat Allah Akan Jiwa Manusia: Belajar dari Teologi St. Bonaventura. Jakarta: Obor.

Atawolo, A. B. OFM. Ciri Pemimpin Politik Menurut St. Bonaventura. Dalam Cristus Medium. Diakses dari https://christusmedium.com/2018/10/ciri-sikap-pemimpin-politik-menurut-st-bonaventura/

da Silva, E. S., & Kristiyanto, E. (2020). Meister Eckhart: Pandangan Teologisnya. Jurnal Teologi, 09.01, 27-48.

Harrington, J. C., & Hall III, S. G. (2015). Three Mystics Walk Into A Tavern. United States of America: Hamilton Books.

Hollywood, A., & Beckman, P. Z. (2012). Christian Mysticism. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Julia A. Lamm. (2013). *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Christian Mysticism*.USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Karwayu, P. P. D. (2019). Elia Si Mistikus. Dalam Candela, 17(1), 14-18.

Lamm, J. A. (2013). The Wiley-Blackwell Companion To Christian Mysticism. USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Lanur, A. (2022). Perihan Kesempurnaan Hidup: Wejangan Untuk Saudari-Saudari Dina. Jakarta: Obor.

Muzairi. (2014). Dimensi Pengalaman Mistik (Mystical Experience) Dan Ciri-Cirinya. RELIGI, X(1), 51-56.

Neong, Y. C. (2019). Narasi Mistis. CANDELA, 17(1), 1-6.

Nico Syukur Dister. (2006). Psikologi Agama, *Tentang Segi Insani Iman dan Agama. Dasar dan Sikap Hidup Beragama*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius.

Ninik Haryanti. GEREJA PADA ABAD PERTENGAHAN HINGGA MASA PERTIKAIANANTARA GEREJA DENGAN PEMERINTAH. Diakses di https://www.academia.edu/33474256/Gereja_Pada_Abad_Pertengahan_Hingga_Masa_pertikaian_dengan_Pemerintah Pada 03 Maret 2024, Pukul 20.14 WIB

Panjaitan, F. (2003). Teologi Mistik Sebagai Jalan Kehidupan: Membangun Teologi Mistik Kontekstual Indonesia Melalui Perbandingan Pengalaman Mistik Paulus Dalam Ii Kor. 12:1-10 Dengan Pengalaman Mistik Bima Dalam Kisah Dewa Ruci (Tesis Magister, Fakultas Teologi, Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana).

Parsons, W. B. (Ed.). (2011). Teaching Mysticism. New York: Oxford University Press Inc.

Rakoczy, S. (2006). Great Mystics And Social Justice: Walking On The Two Feet Of Love. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.

Ray C. Pietry (2006). Late Medieval Mysticism. Kentucky, USA: Westminster John Knox Press.

Robert Glenn Davis (2015). Hierarchy and excess in Bonaventure's Itinerarium mentis in Deum. The Journal of Religion, 95(4), 433-453.

William B. Parsons (Ed.) (2011). Teaching Mysticism. New York: Oxford University Press Inc.