

William James' Theory of Truth and Its Relevance for Religious Education

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Abstract:

Religious absolutism is one of the epistemological roots behind various acts of religious intolerance that threaten the order of life in a plural, dynamic, tolerant and inclusive democratic society. This research is a study of philosophical literature that explores the ideas of William James's pragmatic theory of truth and finds its relevance to religious education in order to anticipate symptoms of religious absolutism. James challenged the absolutism of truth that had been maintained for centuries in the Western philosophical tradition. Truth does not lie in ideas or notions, but rather in the process or event of verification and validation of those ideas or notions in experience. He offers a pragmatic concept of truth that takes into account the practical consequences of ideas in experience. For him, truth should be dynamic, open, continuously growing and plural. Inspired by James' ideas, the author conveys the importance of religious truth and religious education interpreted in a more pragmatic framework. Religious truth is not only built from religious dogma or doctrine but is a reflective and dialogical process through the experience of faith, which is formed in relation to other truths. In a contemporary pluralistic society, religious education cannot be reduced to simply teaching religious doctrine or dogma. Religious education needs to be carried out within a pragmatic framework as a form of religious moderation education that pays attention to efforts to develop critical-reflective abilities to grow faith in a sustainable manner, creatively interpreting human experience, as well as forming human ethical character to maintain a harmonious life together.

Contribution: This research suggests that implementing a pragmatic framework in religious education can help counteract tendencies toward intolerance by promoting mutual respect and understanding among different belief systems. This is crucial in contemporary pluralistic societies where diverse beliefs coexist.

Keywords: *Absolutism; dialogical process; pragmatic framework; religious doctrine; religious harmony.*

INTRODUCTION

In September 2024, Pope Francis had the opportunity to visit Indonesia. When visiting the Istiqlal Mosque, in his dialogue with the Grand Imam of the Istiqlal Mosque, Nasaruddin Umar, Pope Francis gave a message about the importance of tolerance and mutual respect among people of different religions. According to the Pope, the main thing in dialogue between religious communities is not finding common doctrines or religious teachings, but rather mutual respect for the uniqueness of each religion. He said that efforts to find common ground in religious dogma often lead to divisions. What should be done is to respect the differences and uniqueness of each religion. Each person's religious experience varies, so efforts to impose a religious view or belief actually give rise to conflict. Mutual care and respect are important to maintain peace and harmony in life between followers of different religions. During the visit, the Pope praised the practice of tolerance and religious harmony in Indonesia. Even though the Pope praised religious tolerance and harmony in Indonesia, this does not mean that the practice of religious intolerance in Indonesia has never occurred. Several decades after the reform era in Indonesia, the practice of religious intolerance in Indonesia is still ongoing and is a serious concern. Case studies

of intolerant practices in Indonesia were carried out by several researchers. Irvan Nurfauzan Saputra, et al. For example, conducting a case study in the city of Cilegon and finding that there was an intolerant attitude towards adherents of different religions, which was characterized by the refusal to establish churches as houses of worship for Christians (Saputra et al., 2022).

Apart from that, Munawaroh also investigated the identity politics behind cases of intolerance in the form of a ban on the establishment of religious churches in the city of Cilegon-Banten (Munawaroh & Kudus, 2023). Apart from that, Munawaroh also investigated the identity politics behind cases of intolerance in the form of a ban on the establishment of religious churches in the city of Cilegon-Banten (Qodir, 2016). Meanwhile, Sukmayadi et al. said that the exclusive culture that developed in religious communities was the cause of religious intolerance among Generation Z (Sukmayadi, 2024). Widya Setiabudi et al. also investigate the situation of contemporary Indonesian society which is characterized by religious intolerance carried out by the younger generation, as well as efforts by the government to re-establish tolerance between religious communities (Setiabudi et al., 2022).

The practice of religious intolerance supported by various groups of hard-line religious followers makes the field of social relations full of conflict and even violence, which has the potential to give rise to social disintegration. Not only in Indonesia, religious intolerance, which leads to violence, also occurs in various other countries, such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda terror acts or cases of Rohingya violence. Groups of hardline religious adherents spread across various countries are trying various ways to make the religion they believe in the sole, comprehensive, absolute and highest standard of truth for all things, even through terror and violence. They carried out militant actions to increase their influence and even tried to change the state's ideology. Religious intolerance cannot be accepted in the practice of social life in society because it does not respect human autonomy and dignity, while at the same time destroying life together, which is marked by harmony, peace, brotherhood and social solidarity between people.

This religious intolerance is rooted in attitudes or views that absolutize religious truth (religious absolutism). Absolutism is an attitude or understanding that views the truth of certain ideas or values as being single, absolute, final, or permanent. Absolutism is a belief or understanding that absolute truth can develop in various fields, such as moral teachings, scientific theories, religion, and others. The phenomenon of religious absolutism is not something new. The history of the development of the Christian tradition itself was marked by violence due to the absolutism of religious truth. In the Middle Ages, the Church's attitude was closed towards truths other than religion, which is known as the Latin expression *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the Church, there is no salvation). Ideas that differ from Christian dogma are seen as heresy that needs to be eradicated. The pioneers or disseminators of these ideas were ostracized, and some were chased or killed. Meanwhile, in the 21st century, a climate of uncertainty is increasingly coloring various areas of life, with increasingly open global interactions, secularization, and rapid and continuous changes occurring, especially due to technological developments. To adapt to this situation, some people try to build cooperation and harmonization between people creatively and constructively. However, others face it using extreme methods to seek and find certainty in life by firmly asserting their identity, and closing themselves to change, one of which is realized through the absolutization of religion (Sugiharto, 2019). The influence of religious absolutism becomes so strong that it is marked by the symptom of "religious dogma intoxication" in society, where all life's problems are ultimately always linked and resolved through religious dogma and doctrine. The framework of religious absolutism operates behind various extreme religious movements. Instead of wanting to create unity and order under one pure and uniform religious dogma, this movement actually creates a crisis, violent social conflict, which can bring about social disintegration.

This literature research was carried out to explore William James' ideas of pragmatism and their relevance for religious education in facing the growing symptoms of absolutism in religious truth. In this research, the discussion regarding the absolutism of truth is limited within the framework of its meaning for the appreciation of religious life. Here, the focus of researchers' attention is directed at religious education in the context of religious moderation efforts. Several researchers investigated religious moderation education in order to overcome religious intolerance, such as Edy Sutrisno, who researched the manifestation of religious moderation in educational institutions (Sutrisno, 2019), and M. Mukhibat and friends, through literature studies on religious moderation education from a discourse and policy perspective, religious moderation (Mukhibat et al., 2023).

Researchers want to explore the inspiration of William James' pragmatism thinking to further enrich views in order to build moderation between religious believers and achieve the ideal of a harmonious and tolerant life. William James' pragmatic theory of truth was chosen because it was deemed relevant by the author. James' theory of truth is relevant to explore because it places aspects of experience and the process of growth, so that it can make a distinctive contribution in photographing and reinterpreting truth in William James criticized the

absolutism of truth in the Western philosophical tradition from the Greek era to the 20th century, and offered an alternative approach in viewing truth, namely by emphasizing aspects of practical consequences or benefits in human experience. For this reason, this literature research was carried out to describe James' pragmatism thinking and its relevance for the practice of religious life. This research aims to answer several research questions. First, what is the main point of William James's critical thought regarding the absolutism of truth? Second, what is the contribution of William James's ideas to the appreciation of religious life that can support moderation between religious believers? Third, how is religious education organized to support moderation between religious communities?

METHOD

This research is qualitative research using literature study or library research methods. In this research, the author uses a hermeneutic approach to reflect on William James' critical thinking on the absolutism of truth, then explores and finds its relevance for the practice of religious life in Indonesia, as well as religious education. Etymologically, the term hermeneutics comes from the Greek *hermeneuin*, which means "to translate" or "interpret" (Hardiman, 2015). In literature studies, hermeneutics is used to understand and reveal the meaning of a text that holds information about various aspects of human life, such as teachings, norms, customs, community behavior, and so on. In the context of this research, the author uses Gadamer's hermeneutical approach. Gadamer developed a distinctive hermeneutic, namely, interpretation as a form of a dialogical encounter between the horizon of the author of the text in the past and the context of the interpreter's horizon in the present. He states that understanding is not just seeing the author's original intention or meaning in a text in the past, but rather produces a new horizon which is a fusion between the author's horizon and the interpreter's horizon (Gadamer, 1975). In this way, interpretation becomes an activity of producing new meaning that is produced through a dialogical process of mutual understanding between these horizons, not just revealing the initial meaning of a text (Hardiman, 2015).

Research data obtained from literature studies of books, scientific journals and other sources were found to be relevant to actual problems to be analyzed and formulated systematically (Samosir et al., 2023). Here, researchers use research models about actual problems (Bakker & Zubair, 2007). The material object being studied is one of the actual problems, namely the phenomenon of religious absolutism and the steps to overcome it through religious education. Meanwhile, the formal object of this research is the perspective of William James' pragmatism thinking about truth. James did not convey a theory of truth in the form of a clear, systematic and complete explanation. His ideas are fragmented in various writings. However, the author takes the main literary sources in his work, namely *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, *The Meaning of Truth: A Sequel to "Pragmatism"*, and *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. From this excavation, it was found that the meaning of James' pragmatic truth can enrich the understanding of the praxis of tolerant religious life as well as education to develop religious moderation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pragmatism Philosophy

Lorens Bagus explains pragmatism as an understanding or philosophical school that views the meaning of a particular concept or idea from its practical consequences. Knowledge and truth are understood based on their practical benefits for solving problems experienced in life. According to him, the Greek term *pragma* means "fact, object, material, something made, activity, work, involving consequences" (Lorens, 1996). Pragmatism developed as a new school of philosophical thought in the 19th and 20th centuries, which was a critical reaction to the tradition of modern thought in Europe in previous centuries. Pragmatism developed in the United States and England, as a school of thought that both criticized absolutism and modern logic that were too dominant (Hadiwijono, 1980). Before the 19th century, analysis through logic played a dominant role in the world of thought. Along with the interest in investigating human experience, as an alternative form of thinking that is too concerned with analysis or argumentation using logic. Pragmatism actually becomes a form of critical reaction to the dominance of logic by not prioritizing the role of logical analysis but rather prioritizing practical consequences for human experience. Pragmatism became very popular in America (mainly thanks to the thoughts of William James as well as other thoughts from Charles Sanders Peirce and John Dewey) so it was seen as an alternative American-style way of philosophizing that was different from the general European tradition.

Classical American pragmatism was developed by C.S. Peirce, John Dewey, and William James. The three of them have the same views, namely that they both offer a new style of philosophy that emphasizes change, especially after discoveries in the field of science and the new world in the 19th century and are both strongly influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution. However, all three have their own characteristics. C.S. Peirce (1839-1914), a logician and mathematician, paid more attention to the perspective of science, scientific methods, mathematics and logic in his ideas of pragmatism. By comparing animal habits that are controlled by instinct with human habits that are determined by belief or belief, Peirce argued that science and truth (including mathematics and logic) are never final and established, but continue to change through a series of tests to be useful for humans (Solomon & Higgins, 2002). John Dewey (1859-1952) emphasized the experiential aspect of his pragmatism. According to him, philosophy must start from experience, so that truth is not something that is established, but is open and continues to change through critical examination and reflection on experience (Hadiwijono, 1980). In contrast to the two pragmatic philosophers, William James (1842-1910) was an American pragmatist philosopher with a psychology background. He succeeded in combining philosophy with psychology, by paying attention to human experience and the plurality of ideas, which have influenced religion, art and inclusive politics (Solomon & Higgins, 2002). Pragmatist thinking is being widely discussed again, along with the growing interest in the study of human experience and the turn of philosophy toward language (Kloppenber, 1996).

James's Critique of the Absolutism of Truth

James offered a new way of thinking in philosophy that had never existed in the European philosophical thought tradition before. He criticized the European philosophical thought system which pursued certainty, stability, or eternity through logical philosophical abstractions. From classical Greek thinkers to Hegel, philosophy has been dominated by logic with its absolute characteristics. Bambang Sugiharto, citing the views of W.C. Smith, shows that the philosophical way of thinking that is dominated by logic is described as a way of thinking that views truth as "or this, or that" (either-or) (Sugiharto, 2019). In Western logic, there is a principle of thinking pioneered by Aristotle, namely the principle of contradiction, where it is impossible for two contradictory propositions to be true at the same time. This means that if one statement is true, then the other statement that contradicts it must be false; it cannot be true. This principle has indeed succeeded in building a Western knowledge system that has been completely established and certain for centuries. However, this principle presupposes the existence of truth absolutism, the way it works is to reject "others" outside the applicable truth.

For James, European philosophical thought is likened to a "temple" that is clean, eternal, noble and established (W. James, 1975). James criticized the philosophical model that was dominated by rationalism and developed an American-style philosophy that was more wild, dynamic, and put forward thinking that emphasized aspects of practical impact or consequences, namely practical benefits in life. As described by Allen, James considered that the clean, established, absolute, and closed philosophical system was contrary to the "rough and dangerous" nature of the American wilderness (like a desert). Philosophy actually has natural characteristics like nature, namely dynamic, never certain, challenging, and continuously open to change (Allen, 1993).

In the philosophical tradition, western metaphysics is trapped in debate activities in search of certainty. Instead of building an established philosophical system through metaphysical debate and speculation in search of certainty, James places philosophy as a "method" that can help resolve debates in metaphysics. In the philosophy of pragmatism, it is not the essence or substance contained in a concept that is to be explored, but its practical consequences for life. In previous eras, philosophy wanted to search for the nature or essence of something that could be used as the foundation of reality. However, the search for the essential actually gives rise to debate. The philosophy of pragmatism is not just abstract theoretical speculation, but rather a method of practical thinking to seek and find solutions to various life problems (W. James, 1907). Pragmatism is a typical American school of thought that emphasizes aspects of practical consequences for life, namely benefits for human life experience.

Before the emergence of pragmatism, in the world of philosophy in Europe, the generally accepted view of truth was agreement with reality. The truth referred to here is truth in a correspondence perspective, namely truth that is assessed based on conformity with reality. According to this perspective, an idea is judged as "true" when it is a description that corresponds to reality as it is and, conversely, is judged "wrong" when it does not correspond to it. For example, the statement "Cows are mammalian animals" is a statement that is true because it is in accordance with existing facts, namely that cows are indeed mammalian animals. However, the statement "Chickens are animals that give birth to children" is a wrong statement because in reality chickens lay eggs and do not give birth to children. In other words, a statement is said to be true when it is a representation or copy of reality. This truth value is contained in the content of ideas that are in accordance with the facts. Conformity with reality has been the

highest reference for the value of truth that cannot be negotiated since philosophy since the ancient Greek era. The truth lies in the content of ideas and is believed to be absolute, established and unchanging.

William James's Pragmatic Truth

James was not satisfied with this general opinion. He stated that truth is not enough to be understood only as a correspondence between ideas and reality. Truth, for James, is not something that is inherent in an idea and has absolute value. Truth is not a static, formal, or stagnant state, but is dynamic and continuously changing. In fact, according to him, conformity with reality itself is problematic. It is difficult to create a completely accurate copy of reality (W. James, 1907). James argued that truth does not exist by itself in ideas (so it just has to be accepted as true), but rather emerges from the "consequences" resulting from those ideas. Truth emerges as a result of the subsequent process applied to the idea. According to James, truth is understood in the framework of events, which involve acts of validation, verification, or proof, as seen in his famous expression, "Truth happens to an idea" (W. James, 1907). Truth is not static as something that is already contained in ideas to be simply believed through logical analysis. An idea is true not because its content is true by itself, but because it has been tested through a process. The truth lies in its practical consequences which are always open and dynamic, which are obtained through a continuous process of validation, verification and proof.

For James, the verification and validation process presupposes a search and evaluation of the practical consequences of ideas realized in experience. According to him, the act of searching for consequences in turn leads humans to a new experience, namely "an experience that is more advanced and provides greater benefits" (W. James, 1907). In the end, a statement is not simply judged as true because of its conformity with reality. Truth emerges because of the practical consequences or benefits that humans can experience in life. This aspect of consequences presupposes open truth. According to James, verification needs to be carried out continuously because something can change from being useful to being detrimental to life, and vice versa. In other words, what has been assessed as beneficial for life still needs to be verified again, so that even greater benefits can be obtained than before, and so on. So, for James, there is no truth that is permanent, single, absolute and static. Truth becomes an "event", namely a "way of working" that continuously directs us to something that is more useful or has added value. In other words, truth is a process that is basically temporary, never final, and always open to change.

James is appreciated as a pluralist. Because it is an event, truth is ultimately open and plural, never closed and singular. Truth is something continuous. For James, there are differences and variations in human practical interests. The verification and validation process in order to find beneficial value as a practical consequence presupposes recognition of differences and diversity. James believes that different interests will at some point meet each other (converge) to form a common interest or mutually felt benefit. There is a kind of mutual "obligation" to achieve and care for the good of life together. Adjustments are made for long-term survival together.

James still values objectivity, but he does not simply fall for objectivism. Allen states that the process towards a common or general truth in James's thought implies the existence of an objectivity of truth, which is understood in an "adaptive" framework (Allen, 1993). Objectivity is an objectivity that continues to move and grow, not static, but following the current situation. James himself rejected objectivism as an attitude that views knowledge as having value only from static objects, without looking at the role of the subject at all.

Apart from James, there were other philosophers who also criticized the absolutism of truth, for example, Nietzsche. Compared with Nietzsche, James' thinking remains distinctive, especially because James emphasizes the important role of experience and the plurality of truth. Medina and Woods point out the similarities and differences between Nietzsche's and James's critique of truth absolutism (Wood & Medina, 2008). According to them, James and Nietzsche both criticized the assumption of truth as having intrinsic, final, established, absolute and fixed value. Both of them also understand the truth in a pragmatic framework, with a character that is dynamic, open and continuously growing. However, Medina and Woods argue that their thinking has fundamental differences. Medina and Woods state that Nietzsche's claim is more "deconstructive", while James is "reconstructive" (Wood & Medina, 2008). This means that James is seen as not intending to completely dismantle the value of truth in the philosophical tradition because he only wants to show an alternative philosophical thought that pays attention to aspects of the practical consequences of truth, as well as the role of human experience. Apart from that, James also emphasized the plurality of human experience. Meanwhile, according to Medina and Woods, Nietzsche's criticism did not stop at matters of practical use but went further than that, aimed at destroying and completely overturning the highest values in the philosophical tradition. Nietzsche aims to free individuals from the slave mentality that makes humans lose creativity and passion for life. Apart from wanting to create superior and creative humans, Nietzsche does not emphasize the plurality aspect of truth.

Interpreting James' Pragmatic Theory of Truth in the Practice of Religious Life

James' criticism of the absolutism of truth can provide inspiration for the ideal of religious life in a multicultural and multireligious society. James offers the idea of pragmatic truth, which allows religion to be experienced more pragmatically so that it can appear in a face that is more "friendly," contextual, continuously developing, and open to other truths.

James views truth as relative without falling into relativism. It also recognizes objective criteria in an adaptive sense, without falling into objectivism. It recognizes the plurality of truths of ideas, where differences in interests are ultimately possible to meet each other, forming a common interest and giving rise to a kind of mutual obligation, to always benefit the greater good in life together. In this case, James' theory of truth can be applied to build a democratic and inclusive social life.

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James firmly rejects dogmatism and absolutism in religion (M. James et al., 2003). He rejects the view that religious truth is absolute and cannot be changed. He criticizes theology's claims to provide absolute and irrefutable dogmatic certainty, as does modern science. For James, religious truth can actually be found through human experience with its diverse characters. Verbal formulations in religious dogma or doctrine are inadequate to be applicable to all people with their respective diverse religious experiences (M. James et al., 2003). Here, religious life is not a matter of conforming to religious standards that are final and eternal, but rather a process of continuously managing human experience in dealing with these standards so that it becomes increasingly relevant and meaningful for him.

James's idea of truth opens up the possibility of reflecting religious truth as a truth that is not stagnant and static, but dynamic and continues to grow. Religion and faith are not lived as something that is established and final but always develop in the process of living together in society along with the changing context of the times. Here, religious truth must not only be understood based on its theological-dogmatic perspective or the absolute content of its teachings but also from its practical consequences in life experience. God is not only found in the texts of the Holy Bible, but also through contact with concrete human existential experiences: suffering, poverty, injustice, joy, and so on. The truth can actually be found through the experience of meeting other people. Religious truth is not only obtained from dogma, but also through processes or symbolic events lived out in religious experience, which bring together and grow in situations of differences and diversity of views and beliefs. Religious truth is actually found through dialogical experiences in mutual encounters that mutually develop empathic sensitivity, solidarity, tolerance and respect for human dignity.

The process of verification and validation in understanding religious truth can be understood as a reflective effort to correct and improve oneself within the framework of faith growth. This presupposes the need for respect and openness to different beliefs or views, as well as a critical attitude and ability towards oneself. Other people with different beliefs are no longer seen as threats, but partners share experiences in an atmosphere of brotherhood to mutually grow and enrich each other's faith. An open attitude towards sources of truth outside of the dogma and doctrine that one believes in is necessary for a religious follower in order to further mature one's beliefs. Here, religion can become a "friendly home" to bring together and celebrate different experiences of faith that build and develop each other.

Religious dialogue is not carried out for the sake of apology or defense of dogma, but to share experiences that are rich in meaning regarding the life of faith. Followers of different religions can meet each other while respecting each other's differences at the level of experience, not religious doctrines. The possibility of meeting points or convergence between adherents of different religions does not lie at a dogmatic level, but at a practical or ethical level, namely the experience of humanity in realizing the common good. At this level, adherents of different religions can find mutual "common obligations" to create a more harmonious life together, for example through the values of respect for life, respect for the environment, justice, peace, brotherhood, solidarity, etc. (Cronshaw, 2021).

James' pragmatic approach can be an inspiration to deal with the symptoms of "religious dogma intoxication". In the midst of various tendencies to seek certainty in religious absolutism, what is needed for religious people is a more "pragmatic" attitude in living their religion. Rather than being busy with various efforts to defend religious doctrine, living a religious life can be more meaningful by seeking common ground for differences in experience, in an inclusive, tolerant and constructive atmosphere to realize the common good.

Challenges for Religious Education

Religious moderation is an idea to maintain the harmony of life between followers of different religions. Edy Sutrisno shows the character of religious moderation as a balance between the practice of one's own religious faith and a respectful attitude towards adherents of different religions (Sutrisno, 2019). M. Mukhibat and friends stated

that religious moderation is intended more to "moderate the way of knowing and applying religious teachings, the way of knowing and applying religious teachings in situations in the midst of a pluralistic society" (Mukhibat et al., 2023). In other words, the main target of religious moderation is to shape the way of thinking and acting of religious adherents to create harmonious and harmonious interactions with other people from different backgrounds.

Furthermore, religious moderation can be realized in various ways, one of which is through education. Religious moderation education is a strategic effort to shape the character of moderate religious people in maintaining religious harmony in a pluralistic society (Mukhibat et al., 2023). In the context of a pluralistic society, religious education ultimately cannot be separated from efforts to build religious moderation as well. Religious education cannot stand alone without involving aspects of religious moderation. The issue here is how religious education can be organized to support efforts at religious moderation (Halafoff et al., 2019; Rothermel, 2020).

Here, the author offers three recommendations for realizing religious education within a pragmatic framework that supports efforts at religious moderation. First, to build a moderate religious character, it is not enough to provide religious education by just teaching religious doctrine or dogma. Religious education does not stop at transferring knowledge so that it becomes a belief of faith. More than that, religious education is aimed at bringing students to a life transformation to become increasingly religious people. Religious education needs to enable students to critically evaluate and reflect on their own faith beliefs throughout life. Students' reflective capacity needs to be developed to form a more mature faith. Teaching religious doctrine or dogma alone without being accompanied by the development of a critical and open attitude will cause religious education to fall into religious indoctrination, which creates individuals who are obedient but do not think further and deeply and whose faith does not develop creatively. Such indoctrination is actually counterproductive because it leads to and encourages religious absolutism (Croce, 2019).

Second, religious education needs to pay attention to experience as a field for contextualizing and reinterpreting religious teachings in concrete life. Maturity and maturation of faith are formed and tested in the process of life experiences that involve interactions with other people from diverse backgrounds. The growth of faith requires dialogue that is characterized by a critical attitude towards oneself and openness to constructive input from others, and that means entering the realm of lived experience from encounters with other people who are different. Contact with concrete human existential experiences will further mature faith. Experience allows for enriching the meaning of the religious teachings that are believed. Experience-based religious education can be provided to realize religious moderation (Heman Ononye & Igwe, 2019; Parkinson, 2020).

Third, in the situation of a pluralistic society, religious education needs to pay attention to efforts to build human ethical character to maintain a harmonious life together, such as empathic concern, respect for other creatures, solidarity, cooperation, and so on. At this practical and ethical level, a meeting point for religious experience and dialogue between adherents of different religions can be possible (Ouyang et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

William James made a valuable contribution by providing an alternative view of truth from a pragmatic perspective. James criticizes the absolutism of truth and offers the idea of truth as a dynamic event that grows continuously through a process of verification, validation and proof in experience, thereby bringing greater benefits to life together. Truth is understood in a pragmatic framework, namely its consequences for human life. James's ideas about pragmatic truth can enrich the understanding of the appreciation of religious life and religious education amidst the tendency of religious absolutism in contemporary human life. From James' inspiration, religion can be approached from a more pragmatic rather than dogmatic perspective. Religious truth is found not in dogma or doctrine of faith, but rather in the experience of living a life of faith in human interactions. Religion and faith are interpreted as dynamic and continuing to grow, not static. Interreligious dialogue is not about defending religious doctrine, but rather sharing life experiences to further enrich and grow each other's faith. Religious education, from a more pragmatic perspective, plays an important role in efforts to moderate religion. Religious education cannot be reduced to simply teaching religious doctrine or dogma. Religious education needs to enable the critical-reflective capacity of students in order to grow and mature their faith throughout life, accommodate the meaning of the experience of faith creatively, and prioritize the development of human ethical character to realize the common good (such as openness, brotherhood, cooperation, empathy, solidarity, and respect for differences). The results of this literature research are open to improvement and criticism, as well as further research. Further research that can be explored includes exploring the roots of religious intolerance, forms of pragmatism in religious life, dialogue in the context of inter-religious moderation, inter-religious moderation education, experience-based religious education, etc.

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