

The Dynamics of Church Life in the Global Era Towards Theological Equilibrium

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Abstract— The digital industrial revolution in the era of globalization where the church lives today is a challenge for church services, especially in implementing their theological views that must be adapted to the times. The essence of theology will never be rewarded. Still, the way and opinions of the church's theology in history have permanently changed; that's why the church needs to find the right formula so that its theological building today does not become a partition and wall between groups but moves in an increasingly unifying movement. as expected by today's millennial generation. The results of this study state that differences in theological views in the history of church development do not make the church better in carrying out its mission in the world; it is like building a wall of exclusivity in each group. The story of the era of globalization accompanied by many challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic in the last two years has changed the paradigm of the church in understanding theology. The pride of each pole of theology in the church has undergone a significant change. It has begun to meet in a new theological paradigm, or we call theological equilibrium, where there is no separation from one another but returns to the awareness of the church's unity, namely one God, one faith, and one baptism.

Keywords— dynamics, church, global, equilibrium, and theology

I. INTRODUCTION

Even though the essence of theology does not change under the influence of the times (because the God spoken of in theology remains the same then, now, and in the future, it will not change in essence), but the way the church does theology does not stop at one method but has a dynamic nature following the times in which the church there is. In his research analysis, Harianto said that "the way the church has theology from century to century has differences because the patterns and developments of science and technology from time to time are different, each theologian or church school expresses their theological views according to the development of knowledge at that time.[1] Observing the life of the church in the era of globalization marked by the advancement of digital technology, we can see a very prominent change both in the way of carrying out its vocation and theology. This change occurred not only by the development of science and technology but also by existing challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic that hit the entire earth, giving a quite significant impact on church theology.

Irwan Widjaja said that the COVID-19 pandemic had given the church a new civilization and understanding of theology. Previously, the congregation was gathered in a church building, with social distancing restrictions, the church would not want to accept non-physical worship or worship carried out through digital applications.[2] Church worship is carried

out digitally and virtual, finally the term church theology without partitions, church without walls, church legalism emerges, where these terms approach the true nature of the church. The very sharp differences in theological views from various previous church denominations, have undergone very significant changes in the digital church era; the church today has more comprehensive insight about God, which is not only limited to the approach of liturgical legalism but can be done with a person's natural state in knowing his God. The paradigm of church theology that is increasingly open to the realities of developments in the global era increasingly encourages every member of the church to break away from the barriers of dogma and begin to enter new theological insights or what the author calls the theological equilibrium point.

In connection with today's technological developments, Yahya Afandi, quoting Rick Warren, said that the dynamics of today's technological media advancements are like a tsunami wave that is difficult to stem from anything except adapting. Failure to understand the context of theology will leave the church or theological group behind.[3] The above statement emphasizes that if the church is too rigid in theology in the old way, then it will be abandoned because the modern generation has its concept and tends to be free from all barriers of theological views because they understand the theological arguments that were initiated in previous times are not necessarily as absolute truth, especially if it becomes barriers between believers. As explained by Otieli Harefa in his analysis of a different theological view on water baptism that has been a debate for centuries between church denominations, but in the end, the different ways of implementing theological opinions do not change any result for those who carry it out.[4] From this explanation, it can be concluded that the differences in theological views in history have not brought significant progress to the church community; for centuries, the church has been divided in defending things that are not the primary goals of the church itself. Suppose the church still maintains its way of doing theology in a generation of digital technology that is increasingly open. In that case, it will be left behind by a generation that is flexible in theology.

II. METHOD

To achieve the objectives in this study, the authors use descriptive qualitative research methods where the research data to be collected and analyzed is explanatory information, descriptions in narrative form, and the state of the church in the era of globalization. As explained by Moleong that qualitative research intends to understand the concept, understand the behavior, perception, and view of the life of a social group naturally.[5] Zaluchu also explained that descriptive research has the character of presenting valid results from the analysis of various supporting information according to research data relating to the main research

topics.[6] While the data collection technique in this research uses the method of observation and analysis of documents taken purposively snowball that is determined according to the goals and needs.[7]

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. *Today's Church Sticks To Principles And Thinks Practically*

The rapid development of the times in the current era of globalization has resulted in significant changes in human civilization, including church members. When the church serves the modern generation, it must be done according to their inclinations. Zaluchu, in his research, said that the tendency of the current age living in the era of digital technology is to prefer to think practically, oriented to ratios and facts, to summarize all complexities, not to like long-winded traditional processes prefer important but straightforward things. Act effectively and efficiently.[8] It means that the church generation in the global era is not interested in endless debates. The world is increasingly open for them, and everyone can get information about everything quickly without any group monopolizing one truth. They prefer practical things because they live in an era that is very open to communication. Meanwhile, discussing the differences in theological paradigms has a lot of complexity, has long explanations, and tends to be long-winded. It becomes a solid reason for the global generation not to like the debate on differences in theological views. Furthermore, Yahya Afandi explained the tendency of the modern era to quote Augustine's statement in his masterpiece City of God, which says that faith and reason are interrelated in knowing God, and knowledge of God will be influenced by developments that humans continue to experience according to the times in which they live.[3] Augustine, who was very well known in his time with his theological views, acknowledged that there would be a movement in human knowledge about God. The rapid development of technology in today's times encourages and colors the human mind in theology. This means that if the church does not respond appropriately to technological advances in theology, especially when it continues to try to build a wall of differences in theological views, its followers will eventually abandon it. Zaluchu re-emphasized that theology always develops according to the times, as long as humans live and think about God, new thoughts will continue to be born about theology according to the needs of their time..[8] In his contemporary theology book, Erwin Lutzer discusses the differences in theological views between Calvinism and Arminianism, which has started from the differences in theological views between Augustine and Pelagius, which ultimately concludes that there are indeed sharp differences in theology but one body, one God and baptism.[9] This statement shows that differences in theological views do not produce eternity in God. Instead, the meeting point, which we call the theological equilibrium in

terms of one God, one baptism, and one body, brings us to a glorious eternity.

B. Today's Church is Realistic and Flexible In Outward Attributes

With the change in the church's worship system from onsite to online, from a church building bordered by a wall to a virtual application, today's church expresses itself ideally according to the development of the global era. It is more flexible in terms of outward attributes. If in face-to-face worship in the church building, every congregation and servant must be religious through features such as robes, slings, suits, and other attributes, online worship through virtual applications is freed from all binding qualities and focuses on the attitude of the church heart to worship God. The present-day church, when it comes to God, meets at one point. All the rituals and attributes do not bind it. It is in line with what the Bible says that God does not see the appearance but the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). God does not need only desire sacrifices, but He loves lovingkindness and knowing God (Hosea 6:6). The Director-General of Christian Guidance, citing research results from the Bilangan Research Center (BRC), said that at the beginning of the 21st century, 50% of the millennial generation (17-37 years) who are identical with the digital era, have left the church, this is a big problem for which the church is responsible. find the right formula to get them back.[10] In the release of its research results, BRC explained that 61% of the millennial generation are not interested in the church because the church system and activities are not relevant to their needs; the church is too old-fashioned and authoritarian.[11] The data and results from the research above show a gap between generations in the church. Church leaders and servants are too busy with all the attributes and legalism according to their dogmatic color. At the same time, the millennial generation thinks more realistically and is flexible in understanding their faith in God according to the times in which they exist.

Desti Samarennna, in her research findings, said that the unity and holiness of the church are not based on the use of attributes and the implementation of liturgical legalism alone but are obtained from an attitude of life that is not polluted by sin and its faith in Christ.[12] The millennial generation understands that the world has become unified when the church maintains its partitions and walls increasingly incompatible with theological developments in the global era. Therefore, in carrying out its duties, the church must indeed remain strong in the substance of having God but must have flexibility in implementation, meaning that the truth must be explained in the development of the millennial generation's thinking. They do not like the attributes and complexities of religion and theology; they prefer the substance of what they believe in. They understand theology as a human interpretation in the knowledge of God in history, and it will continue to develop according to its time.

C. The Theological Equilibrium of the Church Today

In commemorating the centenary of ecumenical history starting from the Edinburgh conference in 1910 until the formation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) or known as the World Council of Churches (WCC), Pribadyo Prakosa concluded that the long history of the ecumenical movement moved with the times so that everyone continues to learn and adapt to the dynamics of the development of existing thought and finally meet at a point of agreement to produce a world ecumenical movement.[13] From this explanation, it is revealed that it is challenging to achieve the church's unity within the walls of dogma; the unity of the church in its essence can be realized through the meeting point of commonality through adaptation to the development of thought. Weinata Sairin, sermons on Reflecting on the 71st Indonesian Churches Association (PGI) Anniversary, said that ecumenism is a movement to realize the one Christian church. [14] In his writings, Sairin reminded the churches not to stagnate in one motion because the heartbeat of ecumenicalism is a movement in the same direction that continues following the current developments, reminded again that every decade of the era has its own challenges so that the church must be able to actualize itself in responding to the needs of the people. Yunny Jones explained that the theological views of religion and society have changed according to the context of global developments. Therefore the church needs to adapt itself in taking this opportunity by building a theological paradigm that is accepted in the worldwide era without changing its essence.[15] In the context of global development, the theological view of the church is certainly not going backward but progressing and developing dynamically; the difference in color theology is not something that needs to be exaggerated because, in the end, we are actually in the same color. Jones said what is more important is how to reach common ground in the confession that your God is my God, your Christ is my Christ.[15] This kind of view, which we call the meeting point of theological equilibrium, is not a wall of differences built but openness without sacrificing the essence of each individual's confession of faith in Christ.

IV. CONCLUSION

The church, which is carrying out its vocation in today's very dynamic era of digital technology development, cannot close itself to the openness of paradigms in theology; the church is required to be flexible in how to implement its theological views because the digital generation in the global era does not like the boundaries of dogmatic walls but is fused in the understanding and alignment of modern theology. Today, the church has lived in a new paradigm that prioritizes the essential catch of its faith rather than liturgical attributes and legalism, understanding and knowing its God more effectively, efficiently, and practically. By understanding the mindset of the modern generation, the church will be able to carry out its duties well in terms of preaching about Christ and

the salvation in it. The church is responsible for building the right theological paradigm in the new era to answer the needs of the church generation who live in digital technology. The dynamics of church life and theology today are increasingly united in their theological perspective, which no longer issues theological differences but flows with one another in a similar paradigm which eventually gives birth to an understanding of what we call meeting at the theological equilibrium point, one faith, one baptism, and one God.

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