

Diligentia

Journal of Theology and Christian Education

Volume: 06, Number: 03, Year: 2024

Diligentia

Journal of Theology and Christian Education

Volume 6, No. 3, September 2024 E-ISSN: 2686-3707

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EDITORIAL

We thank God for His grace, **Diligentia: Journal of Theology and Christian Education**, the journal of Christian Religion Department of Teachers College, Universitas Pelita Harapan could be published. As we hoped in publishing this journal, our department could participate in actualizing our vision to proclaim the preeminence of Christ, as He is the truth, in Theology and Christian education.

The name **Diligentia** contains our philosophy of education. It is both a synonym of Latin word *studium* (study) and a declension of a Latin verb *deliges* (to love), meaning diligent. As Christians we see our study as a spiritual journey, an expression of our faith in Christ to know God and His beautiful works. Creation communicates His attributes and reveals His glory. Accordingly, study (*studium*) is an exploration to know God, the truth, the source (*principium*) of all, and surely the purpose of all, to glorify God the Creator. This simple yet foundational thought conveys the essence of study, a loving act towards God. Diligent works, which are manifested in academic fields, have fruits, one of them is writing. We pray and hope the works on this journal could express our attitude and approach to the Truth: “study it diligently as our love to the Truth.” To God alone be the glory!

Karawaci, September 2024

Editors of Diligentia

Peran Guru Kristen sebagai Penuntun untuk Membangun Komunikasi Efektif dalam Proses Pembelajaran

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Received: 24/04/2024

Accepted: 18/09/2024

Published: 30/09/2024

Abstract

Effective communication occurs if students understand the meaning of the message conveyed by the teacher. If the delivery made by the teacher is not good, there will be a misunderstanding. The study aims to analysed how a Christian teacher can help students learn to communicate effectively. A descriptive qualitative research methodology utilizing literature studies was employed. In the era of postmodernism presenting various truths in assessing the actions taken, it is hoped that Christian teachers will be able to have the right foundation in acting. So, it is possible to build effective communication so that teachers, serving as guides, can understand and appreciate the needs of students, use media, explain messages clearly, and be humble. The conclusion is that Christian teachers as guides can have the right value of truth in building effective communication, namely looking at students as images of God. This is in line with the characteristic of Christian ethics, namely love. So, Christian teachers can love students so that they develop their abilities as a form of responsibility for the potential given by God. One of the ways that teachers do this is by choosing words in delivering messages to students related to assignments. The advice given is to choose a theory that is relevant to effective communication problems in learning so that it can analyze more deeply and find concrete solutions that can be applied to the role of teachers as guides.

Abstrak

Komunikasi yang efektif terjadi ketika siswa memahami maksud dari pesan yang disampaikan oleh guru. Jika penyampaian yang dilakukan oleh guru tidak baik, maka akan terjadi kesalahpahaman. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisa bagaimana seorang guru Kristen dapat membantu murid-muridnya untuk belajar berkomunikasi secara efektif. Metodologi yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah kualitatif deskriptif dengan menggunakan studi literatur. Di era postmodernisme yang menghadirkan berbagai kebenaran dalam menilai tindakan yang dilakukan, diharapkan para guru Kristen dapat memiliki dasar yang benar dalam bertindak. Dengan demikian, dimungkinkan untuk membangun komunikasi yang efektif sehingga guru yang berperan sebagai penuntun dapat memahami dan menghargai kebutuhan siswa, menggunakan media, menjelaskan pesan dengan jelas, dan rendah hati. Kesimpulannya adalah guru Kristen sebagai penuntun dapat memiliki nilai kebenaran yang tepat dalam membangun komunikasi yang efektif, yaitu memandang siswa sebagai gambar Allah. Hal ini sejalan dengan ciri khas etika Kristen, yaitu kasih. Jadi, guru Kristen dapat mengasahi murid agar mereka mengembangkan kemampuannya sebagai bentuk tanggung jawab atas potensi yang diberikan Tuhan. Salah satu cara yang dilakukan guru adalah dengan memilih kata-kata dalam menyampaikan pesan kepada siswa terkait tugas. Saran yang diberikan adalah memilih teori yang relevan dengan

masalah komunikasi efektif dalam pembelajaran sehingga dapat menganalisa lebih dalam dan menemukan solusi konkrit yang dapat diterapkan pada peran guru sebagai penuntun.

Keywords: *Ethics, Effective Communication, Teacher as Guide*

Pendahuluan

Komunikasi antar guru dan siswa merupakan kunci dalam mencapai tujuan pembelajaran di kelas. Materi pelajaran yang disampaikan dapat dipahami oleh siswa, jika seorang guru dapat membangun komunikasi efektif.¹ Komunikasi digunakan guru dalam menyampaikan informasi atau menjelaskan materi pelajaran dengan tujuan memberi pengaruh terhadap pemahaman siswa. Komunikasi efektif diawali dengan bahasa yang lugas dan sederhana serta disesuaikan dengan pengetahuan komunikan agar pesan dapat diterima dengan baik. Seorang guru hendaknya memahami cara berkomunikasi secara efektif dengan siswa berkaitan dengan materi pembelajaran yang disampaikan agar tujuan pembelajaran dapat tercapai sesuai rencana pelaksanaan pembelajaran yang telah dibuat.

Merujuk pada hasil penelitian yang dilakukan di SMPN Kecamatan Moyo Hulu menunjukkan bahwa hambatan komunikasi yang dialami guru dengan siswa saat pembelajaran IPA, di mana siswa tidak tertarik dengan istilah latin yang tercantum dalam buku ajar, termasuk tingkat percaya diri yang rendah berdampak signifikan terhadap keberanian siswa ketika menyatakan pendapat atau bertanya, menjadikan siswa sulit memahami materi.² Dalam pelajaran IPA, terdapat terminologi atau istilah yang sulit dipahami oleh siswa namun guru tidak mampu menjelaskan dengan benar sehingga komunikasi kurang efektif. Selanjutnya, komunikasi saat pembelajaran daring selama masa covid-19 mengalami hambatan karena keterbatasan penggunaan teknologi komunikasi dan informasi oleh guru dan siswa, serta keterbatasan dan ketidakmerataan penggunaan internet.³ Selanjutnya, komunikasi dan siswa yang masih rendah.⁴ Kebanyakan siswa masih sulit untuk memahami materi pembelajaran yang disajikan guru. Hal ini dikarenakan siswa multietnis dengan latar belakang yang beragam dalam pelajaran bahasa Indonesia. Berdasarkan fakta yang ditemukan di lapangan dan kondisi ideal yang diharapkan maka identifikasi permasalahan yang ditemukan adalah guru tidak mampu mengupayakan pemahaman siswa sehingga mereka menjadi malas atau kurang suka dengan materi pembelajaran karena banyak bahasa latin yang tidak dapat dimengerti. Selanjutnya, siswa sulit memahami materi serta cara penyampaian guru terhadap materi tidak membuat siswa paham serta bahasa yang tidak sederhana, tidak menyesuaikan bahasa sesuai pengetahuan komunikan.

¹ Helsi Febrianti, Sufyarma Marsidin, and Sulastri, "Strategi Komunikasi Efektif Guru untuk Meningkatkan Hasil Belajar Siswa Kelas VII.2 pada Bidang Studi IPS," *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Konseling* 4, no 6 (2022): 1349–58.

² Indah Dwi Lestari, "Analisis Hambatan Komunikasi Guru dan Siswa dalam Pembelajaran IPA di SMP Negeri Kecamatan Moyo Hulu," *JiIP - Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan* 4, no. 1 (Januari 2021): 74–77, <https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v4i1.206>.

³ Novita Maulidya Jalal et al., "Komunikasi Efektif Pembelajaran Daring Masa Pandemi," *Mukasi: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 1, no. 2 (Mei 2022): 173–83, <https://doi.org/10.54259/mukasi.v1i2.871>.

⁴ Mochamad Noor Hidayat, "Komunikasi Guru-Siswa pada Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia Kelas VIII," *Jurnal Penelitian Humaniora* 23, no. 2 (2018): 25.

Proses pembelajaran membutuhkan komunikasi efektif guru dengan siswa agar penyampaian materi dapat dipahami oleh siswa. Jika penyampaian materi yang dilakukan guru kurang baik, maka siswa akan kesulitan dalam mengerti dan memahami pesan yang diterimanya, meskipun sebelumnya mereka telah memiliki pengetahuan.⁵ Komunikasi yang buruk antara guru dengan siswa dalam menyampaikan materi terlihat dari penggunaan bahasa atau istilah-istilah kata yang sulit dipahami oleh siswa. Hal ini membuat siswa merasa bingung atau tidak paham dengan pesan yang disampaikan dari guru.

Manusia dalam bertindak berdasarkan pada nilai yang baik dan buruk sesuai dengan pandangannya sendiri. Etika sebagai nilai yang timbul dari filsafat manusia atau budaya suatu masyarakat.⁶ Nilai dapat dilihat sebagai sesuatu yang subjektif karena terpengaruh dari kebudayaan masing-masing pribadi sehingga permasalahan yang muncul saat ini yaitu nilai-nilai moral sebagai dasar penentuan yang baik dan benar kini bersifat relatif. Relativisme merupakan sebuah pemikiran mengenai sifat dari kebenaran semua prinsip moral, yaitu relatif tergantung budaya atau pilihan individu.⁷ Jadi, setiap individu memiliki sudut pandang yang beragam mengenai etika sehingga tidak dapat diidentifikasi secara jelas mana yang baik dan itu. Relativisme merupakan paham muncul di era postmodernisme. Bauman menjelaskan bahwa postmodernisme sebagai moralitas tanpa kode etik.⁸ Oleh karena itu, guru perlu memiliki standar moral yang tepat dalam melihat yang baik dan buruk. Sudut pandang Kristiani akan sistem nilai bukan secara universal karena dasar pembangun sistem etika adalah kebenaran Allah.⁹ Melalui etika Kristen, dapat mengetahui baik dan buruk sesuai kebenaran firman Allah sebagai landasan guru mengasih siswa.

Ditinjau secara teologis, munculnya masalah komunikasi antara guru dengan siswa karena ketidakmampuan guru dalam memandang siswa sebagai gambar dan rupa Allah. Sudut pandang guru merupakan dasar dalam melihat siswa sehingga berpengaruh terhadap tindakan yang dilakukannya. Cara pandang seorang guru berdampak kepada tindakan yang akan dilakukan. Maka, guru Kristen harus memiliki sudut pandang yang tepat agar tindakannya sesuai dengan kebenaran Allah.¹⁰ Oleh karena itu, sudut pandang guru terlebih dahulu harus tepat agar mampu mencapai tujuan pendidikan. Tujuan pendidikan Kristen, yaitu membimbing siswa menjadi pribadi yang bertanggung jawab sebagai murid Kristus.¹¹ Guru Kristen dapat menuntun siswa agar memiliki pemahaman akan materi yang disampaikan sehingga mencapai komunikasi efektif di kelas. Jika komunikasi guru dan siswa

⁵ Dina Huriaty, "Mengembangkan Komunikasi yang Efektif dalam Pembelajaran di Kelas." *Al-Bidayah* 2, no. 1 (2010): 101-111, <https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/284496-mengembangkan-komunikasi-yang-efektif-da-6b641972.pdf>

⁶ Daniel Nuhamara, "Pengutamaan Dimensi Karakter Pendidikan Agama Kristen," *Jurnal Jaffray* 16, no. 1 (2018): 93, <https://doi.org/10.25278/jj71.v16i1.278>

⁷ Fahmi Farid Purnama, "Mengurai Polemik Abadi Absolutisme Relativisme Etika," *Living Islam: Journal of Islamic Discourses* 1, no. 2 (2018): 273, <https://doi.org/10.14421/lijid.v1i2.1731>.

⁸ Iulia Grad and Sandu Frunza, "Postmodern Ethics and the Reconstruction of Authenticity in Communication-Based Society," *Revista de Cercetare Si Interventie Sociala* 53 (2016): 326-36.

⁹ George R. Knight, *Filsafat dan Pendidikan: Sebuah Pendahuluan dari Perspektif Kristen* (Tangerang: Universitas Pelita Harapan Press, 2009).

¹⁰ Lorita Parinding and Wiyun P. Tangkin, "Cara Pandang Guru Kristen terhadap Siswa sebagai Gambar dan Rupa Allah yang Membutuhkan Pemuridan," *Veritas Lux Mea: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristen* 4, no. 1 (2022): 97-106, <https://doi.org/10.59177/veritas.v4i1.116>.

¹¹ Harro Van Brummelen, *Berjalan dengan Tuhan di dalam Kelas: Pendekatan Kristiani untuk Pembelajaran* (Tangerang: Universitas Pelita Harapan, 2009).

didasarkan pada penghormatan terhadap gambar dan rupa Allah dalam setiap pribadi siswa, maka komunikasi akan efektif.¹² Menghormati atau menghargai siswa sebagai gambar dan rupa Allah artinya melihat keunikan siswa secara holistik sehingga guru mampu mengasahi siswa. Guru harus membangun cara pandang yang benar terhadap siswa sebagai gambar dan rupa Allah sehingga dalam penyampaian materi yang sesuai dengan kebutuhan siswa sehingga mereka memahami materi.

Guru dapat menuntun siswa melalui pembelajaran yang berpusat pada Kristus dan berlandaskan Firman Allah sehingga siswa mampu melayani Tuhan menggunakan kemampuan yang dimilikinya dengan penuh tanggung jawab. Manusia sebagai pribadi yang diciptakan segambar dan serupa dengan Allah namun telah jatuh dalam dosa sehingga seluruh aspek kehidupannya sudah tercemar karena dosa. Siswa telah mengalami kerusakan total dalam dirinya karena akibat kejatuhan dosa.¹³ Siswa memerlukan tuntunan dari guru Kristen dalam menentukan jalan untuk bertumbuh menjadi pribadi yang bertanggung jawab dalam kehidupannya sesuai dengan jalan kebenaran Tuhan. Peran guru sebagai penuntun menolong siswa untuk memahami setiap penjelasan materi sehingga menambah pemahaman mereka. Oleh karena itu, peran guru sebagai penuntun memiliki pandangan bahwa siswa sebagai ciptaan Tuhan yang memiliki kebutuhan masing-masing dengan tingkatannya dalam penggunaan bahasa.

Adapun rumusan masalah artikel ini adalah bagaimanakah peran guru Kristen sebagai penuntun untuk membangun komunikasi efektif dalam proses pembelajaran? Selanjutnya, tujuan yang digunakan adalah mengkaji secara filosofis peran guru Kristen sebagai penuntun untuk membangun komunikasi efektif dalam proses pembelajaran. Metode penelitian ini adalah kajian literatur.

Kajian Filsafat Etika dan Komunikasi Efektif

Etika merupakan ilmu yang mempelajari nilai dan perilaku, sehingga fokus etika adalah nilai-nilai dasar yang tepat untuk melakukan suatu tindakan yang benar.¹⁴ Etika berfungsi sebagai dasar bagi seseorang untuk menilai apa yang baik dan buruk agar dapat menghasilkan tindakan yang tepat. Habermas menjelaskan peran komunikasi dalam evolusi sosial dan penggunaannya untuk meningkatkan pemahaman antara individu dan kelompok masyarakat.¹⁵ Melalui aktivitas komunikasi manusia diharapkan dapat mempertanyakan dan memahami bagaimana komunikasi digunakan secara sosial dan budaya, serta mengubah sosial. Dalam memahami komunikasi ditinjau dari sosial ataupun budaya sebagai filsafat komunikasi. Hal ini terjadi karena dalam proses komunikasi membuat kita berinteraksi dengan orang-orang dari berbagai budaya. Filsafat komunikasi membantu mempertimbangkan kembali komunikasi yang akan dilakukan. Oleh karena itu, sangat penting bagi komunikator untuk mengorganisasikan pemikirannya menjadi isi pesan melalui penggunaan bahasa sebagai lambang. Setelah itu, mereka harus mempertimbangkan apakah

¹² Pitaya Rahmadi and Chusmiaty Rombean, "Relasi Guru dan Siswa: Sebuah Tinjauan dari Sudut Pandang Alkitabiah," *Diligentia: Journal of Theology and Christian Education* 3, no. 1 (2021): 16, <https://doi.org/10.19166/dil.v3i1.2567>.

¹³ Louis Berkhof, *Teologi Sistematis: Doktrin Manusia* (Surabaya: Momentum, 2017).

¹⁴ Knight, *Filsafat & Pendidikan*.

¹⁵ Dewi Kusumasanthi et al., "Eksistensi Filsafat Komunikasi di Era Digital," *Jurnal Riset Komunikasi, Media dan Public Relation* 2, no. 1 (2023): 22–37, <https://doi.org/10.53977/jsv.v2i1.981>.

pesan tersebut etis atau tidak.¹⁶ Maka, komunikasi akan berhubungan dengan nilai-nilai, kepercayaan, norma yang mempengaruhi cara pesan disampaikan dan diterima.

Komunikasi memerlukan etika untuk dapat menciptakan komunikasi efektif tanpa adanya pengetahuan etika komunikasi, maka akan terjadinya kesalahpahaman.¹⁷ Etika komunikasi memiliki pengaruh di dalam kehidupan manusia sehingga dapat dijadikan panduan bagi manusia dalam berkomunikasi. Komunikasi efektif dapat ditentukan dari sejauh mana komunikator maupun pihak komunikan bisa memahami informasi yang disampaikan. Proses komunikasi sebagai tindakan yang menciptakan makna yang sama melalui bahasa sebagai simbol/media dalam menyampaikan pesan.¹⁸ Maka, komunikator seharusnya mampu memilih bahasa atau kata-kata yang paling dekat dengan makna yang ingin dicapai secara bersama. Sebab pada dasarnya setiap orang memiliki perbedaan pengetahuan dan pengalaman yang berpengaruh dalam menafsirkan sesuatu.¹⁹ Oleh karena itu, individu dapat memahami komunikasi secara berbeda.

Komunikasi efektif dalam pembelajaran berarti komunikasi ilmu pengetahuan dan teknologi antara guru dan siswa sehingga siswa dapat memahami pesan yang disampaikan oleh guru.²⁰ Kemampuan guru membangun komunikasi efektif di kelas seperti menyampaikan dan menjelaskan materi dengan tepat yang menggunakan bahasa sederhana agar dapat dimengerti oleh siswa. Melalui kajian filsafat etika komunikasi dapat memperjelas prinsip moral yang dipercaya oleh komunikator dan komunikan.²¹ Guru dapat memahami nilai moral yang harus diterapkan dalam proses komunikasi agar pesan yang disampaikan dapat diterima dengan baik serta memastikan bahwa informasi tersebut adalah benar sehingga mudah dipahami oleh siswa. Dengan menggunakan etika dalam berkomunikasi, seorang guru dapat memastikan bahwa pesannya dapat diterima dengan baik oleh siswa dan membantu mereka memahami pelajaran.

Peran Guru Kristen Sebagai Penuntun

Salah satu peran guru ialah peran guru sebagai penuntun. Peran guru sebagai penuntun merupakan suatu peran untuk menuntun siswa menjalani panggilan hidup dan mengembangkan setiap potensi yang ada di dalam diri siswa.²² Guru dipanggil dan dipilih Allah untuk membimbing siswa agar siswa bertumbuh menjadi pribadi yang menyadari akan panggilan Allah di dalam kehidupannya dan hidup seturut dengan kehendak Allah. Guru sebagai penuntun menggunakan berbagai kompetensi yang Allah anugerahkan di dalam kehidupannya dengan pertolongan Roh Kudus untuk menuntun siswa kepada pengenalan akan Allah dan hidup di jalan Allah. Peran utama guru dalam konteks pendidikan Kristen

¹⁶ Muhamad Mufid, *Etika dan Filsafat Komunikasi* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group, 2009).

¹⁷ Afna Fitria Sari, "Etika Komunikasi," *Tanjak: Journal of Education and Teaching* 1, no. 2 (2020): 127–35, <https://doi.org/10.35961/tanjak.v1i2.152>.

¹⁸ Ansar Suherman, *Buku Ajar Teori-Teori Komunikasi* (Yogyakarta: Deepublish, 2020).

¹⁹ Ibrahim, "Makna dalam Komunikasi," *Al-Hikmah* 9, no. 1 (2015): 18–29, <https://doi.org/10.24260/al-hikmah.v9i1.85>.

²⁰ Putu Anggraini, "Pola Pembelajaran Efektif dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Pembelajaran pada Anak Usia Dini," *Pintu: Pusat Penjamin Mutu* 3, no. 2 (2022).

²¹ Juita Paujiah, *Etika dan Filsafat Komunikasi dalam Realita Sosial* (Jakarta: Mahakarya Citra Utama Grup, 2023).

²² Harro Van Brummelen, *Batu Loncatan Kurikulum* (Tangerang: Universitas Pelita Harapan Press, 2008).

adalah membantu para siswa belajar mengenal Allah di dalam Yesus Kristus melalui firman-Nya, sehingga mereka dapat senantiasa bertumbuh menjadi serupa Kristus dalam kehidupan sehari-hari.²³ Guru menuntun siswa dalam proses pembelajaran agar siswa mampu mendapatkan pemahaman dari apa yang dipelajari di kelas. Sehingga siswa sangat memerlukan peran guru untuk meningkatkan kemampuannya selama proses pembelajaran, khususnya di era *postmodernisme*.

Postmodernisme yang bersifat relatif dan menganggap bahwa tidak ada kebenaran yang objektif. Hal ini tentunya bertolak belakang dengan iman Kristen yang berakar pada kebenaran firman Tuhan yang sifatnya mutlak, absolut dan obyektif. Guru perlu memahami bahwa tidak ada kebenaran yang objektif karena dalam pendidikan Kristen hanya ada satu kebenaran yang absolut yaitu firman Allah. Pendidikan Kristen harus berdasarkan Alkitab karena standar kebenaran dalam Kekristenan adalah Alkitab.²⁴ Guru perlu menyadari dasar kebenaran yang tepat sebelum menjalankan perannya sebagai penuntun yang bukan hanya menjelaskan materi namun memberikan pemahaman pada siswa. Sebagai pendidik Kristen, guru diharapkan mampu membentuk karakter dan menyadarkan siswa akan karya keselamatan Kristus dalam hidup mereka, sehingga siswa menjadi individu yang dikehendaki oleh Tuhan melalui komunikasi yang terbangun antara guru dengan siswa di dalam kelas.²⁵ Melalui pengenalannya akan Tuhan, siswa dapat menjadi lebih sadar dan menyadari panggilan Tuhan dalam ladang pelayanan-Nya. Oleh karena itu, guru Kristen memiliki tanggung jawab untuk mendorong siswa mereka untuk mengikuti kehendak Allah di ruang kelas. Dengan demikian, guru sebagai penuntun mampu membimbing siswa untuk mengembangkan kemampuan mereka dan mengenal Allah yaitu melayani Allah dan sesama.

Fondasi Teologis Peran Guru Kristen sebagai Penuntun

Salah satu peran penting guru dalam proses pembelajaran adalah peran guru sebagai penuntun. Peran sebagai penuntun dapat dipahami guru sebagai gembala menuntun siswa sebagai domba. Guru menuntun siswa dalam memahami dan mengenali setiap karunia-karunia yang Tuhan berikan kepada setiap diri siswa, kemudian menuntun siswa mengaplikasikan karunia tersebut untuk melayani Tuhan dan teman sebaya.²⁶ Guru Kristen mempunyai peran penting dalam menuntun siswa terkait dengan potensi yang ada dalam diri mereka hanya untuk berbagi kasih dengan orang lain sebagai respons kasih Tuhan kepada diri manusia.²⁷ Maka, guru dapat menuntun siswa untuk mengerti bahwa kemampuan yang dianugerahkan Tuhan kepada mereka harus dikembangkan sebagai bentuk pertanggunganjawaban di hadapan Tuhan.

²³ Imanuel Adhitya Wulanata Chrismastianto, "Peran Karya Roh Kudus Implikasinya terhadap Pengembangan Pribadi Kualitas Pengajaran Guru Kristen," *Jurnal Polyglot* 14 (2018): 19–30, <https://doi.org/10.19166/pji.v14i1.326>.

²⁴ Louis Berkhof and Cornelius Van Til, *Dasar Pendidikan Kristen: Ceramah-Ceramah kepada Guru-Guru Kristen* (Surabaya: Momentum, 2010).

²⁵ Khoe Yao Tung, *Filsafat Pendidikan Kristen: Meletakkan Fondasi Filosofi Pendidikan Kristen Tengah Tantangan Filsafat Dunia* (Yogyakarta: Indonesia, Andi, 2013).

²⁶ Van Brummelen, *Berjalan dengan Tuhan di dalam Kelas*.

²⁷ Knight, *Filsafat & Pendidikan*.

Guru Kristen memiliki tugas untuk menuntun siswa kepada pengetahuan dan norma yang benar sesuai Firman Allah.²⁸ Hal ini berkaitan dengan peran guru sebagai penuntun yang menuntun siswa dalam kebenaran. Adapun syarat utama menjadi guru Kristen adalah guru yang sudah lahir baru dan memiliki Kristus dalam kehidupannya.²⁹ Pemaparan di atas menjelaskan bahwa sebelum guru Kristen menuntun siswa, harus mengalami lahir baru terlebih dahulu agar dimampukan untuk menjalankan tugasnya. Seorang Kristen yang lahir baru adalah seseorang yang secara pribadi telah menerima Yesus Kristus ke dalam hidupnya dan bertekad untuk menjalani kehidupan yang dikendalikan oleh Firman Allah dan di bawah bimbingan Roh Allah.³⁰ Seorang guru Kristen yang telah lahir baru akan dimampukan untuk dapat melakukan perbuatan baik oleh karena tuntunan Roh Kudus. Tanpa Roh Kudus, Guru Kristen tidak bisa tunduk pada otoritas Allah dan terbelenggu serta dikuasai keinginan hawa nafsu.³¹ Oleh karena itu guru Kristen harus lahir baru terlebih dahulu sehingga mampu menuntun murid sesuai dengan kebenaran firman Allah.

Ketika guru berperan sebagai penuntun, maka guru hendaknya memandang siswa sebagai *imago dei* yang diciptakan Allah dengan keunikan masing-masing dan berbeda dari ciptaan lainnya. Memahami siswa sebagai gambar dan rupa Allah juga akan mempengaruhi cara guru dalam mendidik dan mengajar siswanya.³² Maka, guru sebagai penuntun dapat terlebih dahulu mengenal siswanya. Mengetahui siswa dalam hal ini artinya memandang siswa sebagai gambar dan rupa Allah yang diciptakan Allah dengan begitu unik dan berbeda dari semua ciptaan lainnya. Jika memahami gambar dan rupa Allah dengan baik maka pada hakikatnya kita akan menghadapi sesama manusia dengan sifat mendidik dan menyampaikan pengetahuan dengan baik pula.³³ Untuk memahami hal ini, dapat diartikan bahwa guru yang dapat memandang siswa sebagai gambar dan rupa Allah akan mendidik, mengajar menuntun siswa dengan baik.

Hubungan antara Peran Guru Kristen sebagai Penuntun untuk Membangun Komunikasi Efektif dalam Proses Pembelajaran

Dalam proses pembelajaran guru berkomunikasi dengan siswa sebanyak 70% sehingga guru mendominasi pembicaraan dalam sekali pertemuan.³⁴ Maka, guru berperan penting dalam mencapai keberhasilan belajar karena guru memiliki tugas untuk menyampaikan materi pembelajaran, mengarahkan siswa melalui komunikasi efektif agar siswa dapat mendapatkan pemahaman materi. Komunikasi berperan penting dalam membangun interaksi dan menyampaikan pesan edukatif berupa materi yang akan disampaikan kepada

²⁸ Trinanda Samben and Grace Christian, "Kasih Kristus sebagai Landasan Pengajaran Guru Kristen Pendisiplinan Siswa," *Diligentia: Journal of Theology and Christian Education* 3, no. 3 (2021): 185–94, <http://dx.doi.org/10.19166/dil.v3i3.3185>.

²⁹ Juniriang Zentrato et al., *Kurikulum bagi Pemula* (Surakarta, Indonesia: CV Oase Group, 2019).

³⁰ Dag Heward Mills, *Kebenaran Kunci Bagi Para Petobat Baru* (Kennington: Parchment House, 2017).

³¹ Novel Priyatna, "Peran Guru Kristen sebagai Agen Restorasi dan Rekonsiliasi dalam Mengembangkan Karakter Kristus pada Diri Remaja sebagai Bagian dari Proses Pengudusan," *Jurnal Polyglot* 13, no. 1 (2017): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.19166/pji.v13i1.333>.

³² Anthony A. Hoekema, *Manusia: Ciptaan Menurut Gambar Allah* (Surabaya: Momentum, 2015).

³³ Millard J Erickson, *Teologi Kristen* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2006).

³⁴ Sarita A. Goenawan, "Proses Komunikasi antara Guru dengan Peserta Didik di Elyon International Christian School dengan Menggunakan Second Language," *Jurnal E-Komunikasi* 2, no. 3 (2014): 2.

siswa.³⁵ Oleh karena itu, guru memiliki tanggung jawab dalam keberlangsungan komunikasi efektif dalam pembelajaran.

Kemampuan guru dalam berkomunikasi salah satunya terlihat dari penyampaian pesan yang dilakukan kepada siswa dengan menggunakan pemilihan kata yang baik sehingga tidak membuat mereka kesulitan dalam memahami pesan tersebut. Jika terjadi kesalahpahaman antara komunikator dan komunikan maka komunikasi efektif tidak akan terjadi.³⁶ Maka, guru Kristen sebagai komunikator menjalankan salah satu perannya yaitu penuntun untuk mengarahkan siswa agar mengembangkan kemampuan yang dimiliki. Guru Kristen membangun komunikasi efektif di kelas harus menyadari bahwa siswa memiliki potensi yang berbeda. Maka, seharusnya guru tidak perlu terlalu mendominasi pembelajaran karena akan memendam setiap bakat siswa dalam mengeluarkan setiap kreativitas dan aktivitas yang akan dilakukan oleh siswa.³⁷ Oleh karena itu, guru dapat mengembangkan potensi dalam diri siswa dengan cara membimbing dan memberikan arahan atau ruang agar mereka dapat mengembangkan kemampuannya. Hal ini sebagai bentuk tanggung jawab siswa atas pelayanannya di hadapan Allah. Terlebih dari itu hal ini dapat dicapai melalui kemampuan guru untuk membangun komunikasi efektif yang memerlukan etika Kristen sebagai dasar untuk menuntun siswa.

Peran Guru Kristen sebagai Penuntun untuk Membangun Komunikasi Efektif dalam Proses Pembelajaran

Komunikasi dalam pembelajaran berguna bagi guru untuk menyampaikan materi belajar kepada siswa agar materi tersebut dapat diterima dan dicerna dengan baik sehingga berpengaruh terhadap pemahaman siswa.³⁸ Tujuan dari komunikasi untuk mencapai pemahaman yang sama antara kedua pihak yang ikut serta dalam proses komunikasi. Namun, komunikasi dapat terjadi secara tidak efektif karena kesalahan dalam pemahaman pesan oleh komunikan yang disebabkan oleh perbedaan persepsi individu.³⁹ Hal ini disebabkan karena adanya keragaman pribadi yang masih menganut budayanya.⁴⁰ Komunikasi yang dilakukan manusia didasarkan oleh nilai-nilai yang dipercaya baik itu budaya maupun lingkungannya. Jadi, budaya dan komunikasi menjadi kesatuan yang dapat menentukan seseorang dalam memahami pesan yang disampaikan. Proses komunikasi terdiri dari guru dan siswa yang memiliki perbedaan latar belakang budaya dan saling berinteraksi. Semua orang hidup dalam lingkungan dengan budaya tertentu, dan tingkah

³⁵ Eva Mustikasari and Umam Najmul. "Membangun Komunikasi Efektif Guru dan Peserta Didik dalam Proses Belajar Mengajar di SMK Samudera Buana Lingkaplancar" *Jurnal Lunggi: Jurnal Literasi Unggulan Ilmiah* 1, no. 1 (2023): 24–31.

³⁶ Parto Parto, "Berkomunikasi Efektif dengan Kalimat Efektif dalam Bahasa Indonesia," *Mediakom: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 3, no. 2 (2020): 169, <https://doi.org/10.32528/mdk.v3i2.3132>.

³⁷ Yunus, "Telaah Aliran Pendidikan Progresivisme dan Esensialisme dalam Perspektif Filsafat Pendidikan," *Jurnal Cakrawala Pendas* 2, no. 1 (2016): 29–39, <https://doi.org/10.31949/jcp.v2i1.319>.

³⁸ Ujang Mahadi, "Komunikasi Pendidikan (Urgensi Komunikasi Efektif dalam Proses Pembelajaran)," *Joppas: Journal of Public Policy and Administration Silampari* 2, no. 2 (2021): 80–90, <https://doi.org/10.31539/joppa.v2i2.2385>.

³⁹ Muhammad Zhafran Palito, *Pentingnya Manajemen Konflik di dalam Komunikasi Antarbudaya agar Terhindarnya Miskomunikasi yang dapat Menyebabkan Perpecahan* (Solok: Insan Cendekia Mandiri, 2022).

⁴⁰ Marselina Lagu, "Komunikasi Antarbudaya di Kalangan Mahasiswa Etnik Papua dan Etnik Manado di Universitas Sam Ratulangi Manado," *Jurnal Acta Diurna* 5, no. 3 (2016).

laku mereka dalam komunikasi dipengaruhi oleh lingkungan budaya tersebut. Cara seseorang dalam berkomunikasi akan dipengaruhi oleh bahasa, aturan, atau norma yang ada.⁴¹ Oleh karena itu, setiap orang memiliki cara berkomunikasi sesuai latar belakang budayanya masing-masing yang membedakannya dengan orang lain.

Nilai-nilai yang berdasarkan masing-masing budaya akan dilihat sebagai sesuatu yang subjektif karena tidak ada dasar dalam menentukan baik dan buruknya. Hal ini sejalan dengan relativisme, yang berarti bahwa tidak ada moralitas universal; itu berarti berkaitan dengan budaya atau keputusan individu.⁴² Pemahaman ini menjadikan individu untuk mempertimbangkan nilai-nilai dari dalam dirinya sendiri dan lingkungan.⁴³ Jadi, orientasi seseorang yang melandaskan paham relativisme akan memahami bahwa etika berdasarkan perspektif budaya mereka sendiri sehingga tidak ada *standard* yang kuat selain norma yang dipercaya. Ciri-ciri dari postmodernisme yaitu berwatak relativisme artinya kebenaran merupakan hal yang subjektif berdasarkan interpretasi dari manusia itu sendiri.⁴⁴ Filsafat ini mengarahkan kepada cara berpikir yang mandiri dan berbeda (relatif) dengan menyesuaikan pandangannya terkait yang dipandang baik.⁴⁵ Filsafat postmodernisme akan terus menawarkan kebenaran yang pada akhirnya akan diakui sebagai pilihan seseorang.

Postmodernisme tidak terpaku pada suatu kebenaran tertentu, sekalipun kebenaran yang dianggap dalam Tuhan atau agama dan menekankan subjektifitas dalam sebuah kebenaran.⁴⁶ Manusia bersandar pada pemikirannya sendiri dalam menentukan baik dan buruk. Kebenaran dalam postmodernisme yaitu setiap individu dalam menafsirkan sesuatu berasal dari pemikiran masing-masing dan hasil dari interpretasi dan konstruksi budaya.⁴⁷ Seorang guru Kristen berpotensi untuk terjebak dalam pemikiran postmodernisme di saat ia berpikir bahwa pandangannya lebih baik sehingga ia mempercayai itu sebagai kebenaran yang lebih tinggi dan untuk validasinya berdasarkan pada masyarakat tempat guru berkomunikasi. Era postmodern terkenal dengan relativisme mengakibatkan moral yang kacau, sebab pertimbangan moral berdasarkan rasional individu atau kelompok.⁴⁸ Jadi, kebenaran dalam postmodernisme terbatas oleh pemikiran masing-masing individu. Komunikasi yang berkembang tanpa kendali dalam postmodern akan menciptakan fatalitas

⁴¹ Riza Sukma, "Realitas Komunikasi Lintas Budaya di Indonesia: Studi Kasus Pemilihan Bahasa Remaja Era Kekinian di Jakarta," *Konferensi Linguistik Tahunan Atma Jaya* (Jakarta: Universitas Katholik Indonesia Atma Jaya, 2018), 419–23.

⁴² Purnama, "Mengurai Polemik Abadi Absolutisme dan Relativisme Etika."

⁴³ Hardi et al., "The Effect of Relativism Ethical Orientation, Personal Cost, and Moral Intensity on Internal Whistleblowing Intention: The Moderating Role of Organizational Commitment," *International Journal of Engineering and Technology* 7, no. 3.35 (2018): 122–25.

⁴⁴ Johan Setiawan and Ajat Sudrajat, "Pemikiran Postmodernisme dan Pandangannya terhadap Ilmu Pengetahuan," *Jurnal Filsafat* 28, no. 1 (2018): 25, <https://doi.org/10.22146/jf.33296>.

⁴⁵ Anggi Maringan Hasiholan and Yehezkiel V. Fernando, "Manfaat Penggunaan Gadget terhadap Minat Belajar Siswa Pendidikan Kristen pada Era Postmodern," *Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan* 3, no. 4 (2021): 2400–10, <https://edukatif.org/index.php/edukatif/article/view/1114>.

⁴⁶ Marsono Marsono, "Konsep Ketuhanan dalam Filsafat Postmodernisme Perspektif Karen Armstrong," *Sanjiwani: Jurnal Filsafat* 9, no. 2 (2018): 43, <https://doi.org/10.25078/sjf.v9i2.1621>.

⁴⁷ Ferry Simanjuntak, Yosep Belay, and Joko Prihanto, "Tantangan Postmodernisme bagi Wacana Teologi Kristen Kontemporer," *Kenosis: Jurnal Kajian Teologi* 8, no. 1 (2022): 76–98. <https://doi.org/10.37196/kenosis.v8i1.348>.

⁴⁸ Julianus Zaluchu, "Gereja Menghadapi Arus Postmodern dalam Konteks Indonesia Masa Kini," *Jurnal Geneva* 17, no. 1 (2019): 26–41.

komunikasi yaitu ketiadaan tujuan, fungsi dan makna dalam komunikasi itu sendiri.⁴⁹ Maksudnya adalah tidak ada fungsi makna dalam komunikasi, yang ada hanya penggunaan bahasa, kode dan tanda. Komunikasi yang terjadi di dalamnya seperti ketidakjelasan dalam bahasa komunikasi sehingga komunikasi tidak memperoleh makna yang diterima oleh komunikan. Guru akan dipertemukan beragam kebenaran yaitu relatif dan absolut dalam menilai tindakan yang dilakukannya. Bagi postmodernisme kebenaran yang relatif berdasarkan interpretasi dari manusia itu sendiri sehingga tidak objektif.⁵⁰ Postmodernisme dapat membuat standar dan prinsip pendidikan tidak jelas.⁵¹ Oleh karena itu, harus diimbangi dengan etika yang tepat dalam pendidikan. Etika sebagai sarana untuk memberikan orientasi bagi individu dalam bertindak.⁵² Etika komunikasi mampu memberi pemahaman kepada guru komunikasi yang seharusnya. Penilaian akan benar atau tidak dalam etika komunikasi didasari oleh pelaku komunikasi sehingga saat membuat penilaian secara etis didasarkan oleh hati nurani.⁵³ Jika penilaian melalui hati nurani akan terlihat subjektif karena hati nurani terbentuk oleh lingkungan sekitar.⁵⁴ Tidak ada yang dapat memastikan dengan tepat terkait penilaian tersebut benar atau tidak. Oleh karena itu, perlu etika yang tepat dan benar yaitu Alkitab sehingga guru mampu menunjukkan penghormatan akan gambar dan rupa Allah yang ada di dalam diri siswa.

Dalam keberlangsungan proses pembelajaran akan dipengaruhi oleh cara pandang guru terhadap siswa. Sudut pandang seorang guru Kristen berkaitan dengan identitas guru Kristen sendiri, yaitu guru yang sudah mengalami lahir baru.⁵⁵ Maka, ia mampu bertindak dengan melihat dari kebenaran Allah. Sebagai orang Kristen harus meyakini bahwa siswa merupakan gambar dan rupa Allah sebagai kebenaran Allah yang paling mendasar dan tidak boleh terabaikan dalam pendidikan.⁵⁶ Cara guru dalam memandang siswa akan berdampak kepada tindakannya. Maka, setiap guru Kristen diharuskan untuk memiliki perspektif yang tepat agar tindakan yang diambil juga tepat. Setiap siswa adalah gambar dan rupa Allah yang memiliki beragam potensi dan keunikannya masing-masing yang harus dikembangkan.

Guru sebagai penuntun dalam perjalanan yang harus didasarkan pada pengetahuan dan pengalamannya dan bertanggung jawab atas kelancaran perjalanan itu.⁵⁷ Artinya, guru sebagai penuntun harus dapat memperhatikan semua aspek dari siswa ketika ia menuntun siswa. Oleh karena itu, peran guru sebagai penuntun harus dapat menolong siswa untuk dapat bertumbuh dan juga mengalami perubahan dan mencapai tujuan pendidikan. Guru

⁴⁹ Yasraf Amir Piliang, "Posmodernisme dan Ekstasi Komunikasi," *Mediator: Jurnal Komunikasi* 2, no. 2 (2001): 165–76, <https://ejournal.unisba.ac.id/index.php/mediator/article/view/716>.

⁵⁰ Setiawan and Sudrajat, "Pemikiran Postmodernisme dan Pandangannya terhadap Ilmu Pengetahuan."

⁵¹ Olufemi J Ishola, "Effects of Postmodernism on Religious Education Practice," *The American Journal of Biblical Theology* 23, no. 9 (2023): 1–15.

⁵² Lolita Ririhena, *Etika Kristen* (Indramayu: CV. Adanu Abimata, 2022).

⁵³ I Made Sutika, "Kajian tentang Pelaksanaan Etika Komunikasi dalam Aktivitas Pembelajaran di SMA Dwijendra Denpasar," *Seminar Nasional INOBALI* (2019): 809–15.

⁵⁴ Bambang Subandrijo, "Analisis Peran Hati Nurani," *Jurnal Theologia in Loco* 2, no. 2 (2020): 220–238, <https://doi.org/10.55935/thilo.v2i2.204>.

⁵⁵ Dinda Mawar Sandi and Cathryne Berliana Nainggolan, "Cara Pandang Guru Kristen terhadap Otoritas dalam Kerangka Kisah Agung," *Kenosis: Jurnal Kajian Teologi* 6, no. 2 (2020): 180–98, <https://doi.org/10.37196/kenosis.v6i2.95>.

⁵⁶ Berkhof and Van Til, *Dasar Pendidikan Kristen*.

⁵⁷ Juhji, "Peran Urgen Guru dalam Pendidikan."

menjadi rekan sekerja Allah untuk mendidik siswa di dalam kebenaran.⁵⁸ Guru Kristen berperan dalam menuntun siswa untuk membangun komunikasi efektif di dalam kelas sehingga berkaitan dengan filsafat etika. Etika Kristen memiliki ciri khas yaitu kasih yang berlandaskan pada kehendak Allah.⁵⁹ Artinya kasih yang mampu memberikan diri untuk mengasihi orang lain dengan sepenuh hati sehingga semakin mengenal kasih Kristus.⁶⁰ Seorang guru Kristen sebagai penuntun memiliki peran dalam membimbing siswa ke arah yang lebih baik. Pengarahan ke arah yang lebih baik itu merupakan salah satu wujud dari kasih guru kepada siswa.⁶¹ Sangat penting bagi seorang guru untuk mengetahui dan memahami dasar etika Kristen dalam mendidik siswa karena tanpa dasar yang pasti, pengajarannya tidak memiliki dasar yang kuat.

Komunikasi yang terjadi dalam pembelajaran yaitu dalam proses mengolah informasi dari suatu pengetahuan untuk membentuk suatu pemahaman baru dengan melibatkan interaksi, dan pertukaran informasi mengenai suatu pengetahuan.⁶² Kemampuan guru dalam berkomunikasi dengan siswa memiliki tujuan agar pesan yang disampaikan dapat dipahami oleh siswa. Proses pembelajaran yang sedang berlangsung di kelas sebagai bagian dari proses komunikasi. Maka sebagai seorang guru, seharusnya memahami tentang penerapan komunikasi efektif. Dalam menerapkan komunikasi efektif terdapat 2 macam komunikasi yang harus dipahami oleh guru yaitu komunikasi verbal dan non verbal. Komunikasi verbal merupakan bentuk komunikasi secara tertulis atau lisan.⁶³ Melalui kata-kata, guru secara lisan menyampaikan dan menjelaskan gagasan, pesan terkait materi pembelajaran. Sarana dalam komunikasi verbal adalah bahasa sebagai kemampuan untuk menyampaikan pesan secara lisan.⁶⁴ Jadi, melalui bahasa yang sederhana dapat menolong siswa untuk memahami pesan yang disampaikan.

Dalam proses pembelajaran memerlukan komunikasi dalam mencapai tujuan yang diinginkan. Komunikasi dinyatakan efektif jika penerima pesan memiliki pemahaman yang sama terhadap pesan yang dikirimkan oleh pengirim pesan.⁶⁵ Maka, guru berperan penting untuk membangun komunikasi efektif dalam proses pembelajaran agar siswa bukan sekedar mendengar penjelasan guru namun juga memahami bahkan terjadi perubahan dalam dirinya. Terdapat lima dasar yang diperlukan untuk membangun komunikasi efektif, yaitu 1) *respect* artinya menghargai setiap individu sebagai komunikan; 2) *empathy* artinya kemampuan komunikator dalam menempatkan diri terhadap keadaan yang dihadapi oleh orang lain; 3)

⁵⁸ Khoe, *Filsafat Pendidikan Kristen*.

⁵⁹ Malcom Brownlee, *Pengambilan Keputusan Etis dan Faktor-Faktor di dalamnya* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2006). <https://www.scribd.com/document/399438833/pengambilan-keputusan-etis-dan-faktor-faktor-didalamnya-docx>.

⁶⁰ Rencan Carisma Marbun, "Kasih dan Kuasa Ditinjau dari Perspektif Etika Kristen," *Jurnal Teologi Cultivation* 3, no. 1 (2019): 88–97, <https://doi.org/10.46965/jtc.v3i1.259>.

⁶¹ Dedy Panggabean, *Mengapa Aku Mengajar? Memandang Kristus sebagai Sang Guru Agung* (Jakarta: Literatur Perkantas, 2019).

⁶² Nofrion, *Komunikasi Pendidikan: Penerapan Teori dan Konsep Komunikasi* (Jakarta: Prenadamedia Group, 2016).

⁶³ Parianto and Siti Marisa, "Komunikasi Verbal dan Non Berbal dalam Pembelajaran," *Analitica Islamica: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 11, no. 2 (2022): 403, <https://www.slideshare.net/yesimukti/komunikasi-verbal-dan-non-verbal>.

⁶⁴ Unsa Maulana, *Terampil Berkomunikasi Lisan dan Tulisan* (Bandung: Tata Akbar, 2022).

⁶⁵ Suriya Jaya, "Strategi Membangun Komunikasi yang Efektif untuk Meningkatkan Kinerja Guru di Sekolah," *Pionir: Jurnal Pendidikan* 10, no. 2 (2021): 20–36.

audible artinya kemampuan yang dimiliki komunikator dalam memanfaatkan berbagai media; 4) *clarity* artinya komunikator mampu memberikan pesan dengan jelas agar tidak menimbulkan multi interpretasi oleh komunikan; 5) *humble* artinya seorang komunikator bersikap rendah hati sebagai dasar membangun komunikasi efektif.⁶⁶ Penjelasan di atas menunjukkan bahwa ada 5 hal yang perlu diperhatikan dalam membangun komunikasi efektif saat menyampaikan materi. Sikap seorang komunikator diperlukan sebagai salah satu kunci keberhasilan proses pembelajaran. Banyak cara yang dilakukan dalam menyampaikan pesan seperti menggunakan media komunikasi yang tepat sesuai dengan karakteristik siswa serta simbol yang digunakan. Guru sebagai seorang komunikator memiliki kemampuan dalam menyampaikan informasi, pesan kepada siswa. Guru bukan hanya mentransfer ilmu pengetahuan kepada siswa namun ada nilai dan norma kehidupan juga bisa dikomunikasikan guru dalam proses pembelajaran. Oleh karena itu, landasan guru dalam memandang komunikasi berpengaruh terhadap kehidupan siswa.

Guru Kristen memiliki tugas untuk menuntun siswa kepada pengetahuan dan norma yang benar sesuai Firman Allah.⁶⁷ Seorang guru Kristen dapat melihat siswa sebagai gambar dan rupa Allah. Guru harus mengalami kelahiran baru oleh karena karya Roh Kudus sehingga terjadi perubahan dalam diri guru. Kelahiran baru memberikan identitas yang baru sebagai anak-anak Allah sehingga memiliki kemampuan untuk tidak berbuat dosa, mengasihi dan mengenal Allah.⁶⁸ Roh Kudus memampukan guru Kristen untuk mengasihi para siswa sebagai gambar dan rupa Allah yang bernilai. Selain itu, guru Kristen harus memiliki etos kerja yang dipimpin oleh Roh Kudus sebagai saluran kasih untuk membedakan kebenaran sejati dengan beragam pengajaran palsu yang bersifat sekuler di era post modern.⁶⁹ Maka, guru Kristen hendaknya lebih bijak dalam menghadapi beragam kebenaran yang melandasi filsafat tersebut dan bertentangan dengan firman Allah. Hoekema mengatakan bahwa karakteristik orang yang lahir baru adalah melakukan yang benar, tidak hidup dalam dosa, percaya bahwa Yesus adalah Kristus, dan mengalahkan semua kesulitan dunia.⁷⁰ Maka salah satu indikatornya yaitu guru mampu berkomunikasi efektif dengan siswa sehingga mereka mampu mengenal kebenaran Allah melalui sesuatu yang dikomunikasikan guru terhadap topik pelajaran sehingga hal berpengaruh dalam kehidupannya sehari-hari. Guru Kristen mampu mendorong siswa agar bertumbuh secara dinamis dalam komunitas kebenaran.⁷¹ Oleh karena itu, para siswa dapat menggunakan ide-ide ini dalam kehidupan nyata untuk melayani Tuhan dan mengasihi sesama. Maka, komunikasi efektif perlu

⁶⁶ Luthfi Tazkiyatul Anwariah Kiya and Akhmad Rifai, "Komunikasi Efektif Supervisor dalam Penyelenggaraan Supervisi Akademik sebagai Upaya Meningkatkan Kinerja Guru MTs. Nurul Fata," *Sinau : Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan dan Humaniora* 8, no. 1 (2022): 65–84, <https://doi.org/10.37842/sinau.v8i1.81>.

⁶⁷ Trinanda and Grace, "Kasih Kristus sebagai Landasan Pengajaran Guru Kristen dalam Pendisiplinan Siswa."

⁶⁸ David Eko Setiawan, "Kelahiran Baru di dalam Kristus sebagai Titik Awal Pendidikan Karakter Unggul," *Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili Pembinaan Warga Jemaat* 3, no. 2 (2019): 154, <https://doi.org/10.46445/ejti.v3i2.135>.

⁶⁹ Imanuel Adhitya Wulanata Chrismastianto, "Peran dan Karya Roh Kudus Implikasinya terhadap Pengembangan Pribadi Kualitas Pengajaran Guru Kristen," *Jurnal Polyglot* 14 (2018): 19–30, <https://doi.org/10.19166/pji.v14i1.326>.

⁷⁰ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Diselamatkan oleh Anugerah* (Surabaya: Momentum, 2017).

⁷¹ Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, 3rd ed. (San Fransisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2017).

dilakukan kepada siswa untuk menuntun mereka agar mengembangkan kemampuan yang dimiliki sebagai bentuk pelayanan kepada Tuhan.

Pengajaran yang dilandaskan kasih yang mengarahkan siswa ke jalan yang benar. Guru Kristen sebagai penuntun perlu menuntun siswa dengan kemampuan yang beragam mampu mengenal setiap pribadi sebagai ciptaan yang unik. Keefektifan pembelajaran didukung dengan komunikasi efektif seperti menggunakan bahasa yang sederhana, tidak menggunakan istilah kata yang sulit bagi siswa. Guru sebagai komunikator menyampaikan pesan/materi dengan menggunakan bahasa verbal melalui pemilihan kata yang disesuaikan dengan bidang studi serta berdasarkan jenjang satuan pendidikan. Misalnya ketika guru memberi arahan tugas membuat *mind map* kepada siswa, maka dalam penyampaian kepada siswa SD seperti memberi arahan secara spesifik dalam membuat rangkuman, informasi yang harus tercantum, harus terdapat gambar, ada warna atau tidak. Sedangkan siswa SMP/SMA, guru hanya memberi arahan tugas yang dikerjakan beserta panduan pengerjaan tanpa penjelasan secara runtun. Maka, melalui peran guru sebagai penuntun mampu membangun komunikasi efektif di kelas agar guru dan siswa memiliki pemahaman yang sama. Dengan demikian, mampu menolong siswa untuk mengembangkan kemampuan yang dimiliki siswa.

Kesimpulan

Guru mampu menerapkan cara komunikasi yang tepat dalam proses pembelajaran untuk menunjang keberhasilan di kelas. Peran guru tidak hanya menyampaikan materi namun siswa memahami pesan yang disampaikan. Guru terlebih dahulu memilih bahasa yang sederhana ataupun kata yang sesuai dengan tingkatan siswa yang diajar. Jika siswa tingkat dasar maka penyampaian informasinya harus spesifik dan beruntun sehingga siswa mengerti maksud dari guru. Sedangkan siswa tingkat menengah ke atas, guru hanya memberi arahan dan panduan tanpa dibimbing langkah demi langkah. Maka, guru perlu menerapkan 5 hal dalam membangun komunikasi efektif. Pertama, yaitu menghargai siswa sebagai komunikan sehingga dapat menentukan cara yang tepat dalam berkomunikasi. Kedua, memahami kondisi kemampuan siswa dalam kelas. Ketiga, materi yang disampaikan mampu diterima siswa dengan bahasa yang jelas dalam berkomunikasi agar mudah diterima. Keempat, kejelasan pesan agar tidak menimbulkan multi interpretasi. Kelima, menyampaikan materi dengan sikap rendah hati agar siswa memahaminya. Guru terlebih dahulu mengenal tiap siswa yang ada di kelas dengan beragam keunikan sehingga guru dapat memikirkan cara yang tepat dalam berkomunikasi. Oleh karena itu, sangat penting sekali peran guru dalam menciptakan komunikasi efektif sehingga anak mampu memahami maksud pesan dengan tujuan yang telah ditentukan. Tujuannya agar dapat menambah wawasan ilmu pengetahuan dan menimbulkan perubahan tingkah laku pada diri siswa.

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Men Shall Be Lovers of Self, Money and Pleasure (II Timothy 3:2, 4): A Contemporary Discourse on Apostle Paul Prophecy of the End-Time

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Received: 10/06/2024

Accepted: 23/09/2024

Published: 30/09/2024

Abstract

The present time in Nigeria and globally has been more perilous than ever, characterized with bizarre occurrences within the church and the larger society. This study explores the Pauline eschatological prediction of the perilous times when men will become lovers of self, lovers of money, and lovers of pleasure more than God (II Timothy 3:1, 2 & 5). Experiential and theological methodologies were adopted for generating qualitative primary and secondary data. The theological aspect of the research employed the tools of biblical exegesis, textual analysis, and literatures. The experiential aspect involved in-depth interviews (IDIs), observations, social media contents and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) to access current events and personalized experiences of respondents who were purposively selected from within and outside the church. The results were discussed in the light of Christian theology, social ethics and Pastoral ministry. The Nigerian society is evidently witnessing the perilous times when love of self, money and pleasure will become the untoward defining features of human society and sadly too, of men that profess the faith. Transactional gospel, gimmickry, merchandize of holy things, and self-indulgent love of money are rife in the contemporary church. Ostentatious lifestyles, lack of support for the minister at the local church, and false messages on material blessings are what trap church ministers and laypersons in this end-time evil. The context and practice of 'full time' ministry when the local assembly is not able to support its minister is a challenge that predisposes some to 'Simoniacal' presentations, offering the gifts of God for monetary gain. Sound biblical teachings to protect the people of God and expose the mercenary spirit in sacred function is the local church most potent weaponry.

Keywords: Perilous time, Lovers of Self, Lovers of Money, Lovers of Pleasure, Prophecy

Introduction

Apostle Paul, a writer of thirteen letters in the New Testament as an old man, imprisoned for the second time in the Roman cell, facing imminent and inevitable death was preoccupied with last day's unprecedented evil trends already manifesting around in his time. Therefore, he wondered what would become of those days ahead, especially within the church. He, therefore, in his last letter to his spiritual son, Timothy, by divine inspiration,

made prophetic allusion to the horrific lifestyle and warp mindset that will characterize many people living at the end time (II Timothy 3:1-5).¹ His prophecy contains some eighteen (18) end time evil traits, spiritual and moral decadence that will be manifesting within the church and in the world. At the beginning of this melancholy forecast, we find the leading statement: “For men shall become lovers of self, lovers of money and toward the conclusion he mentions that ... ‘men will become lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God” (II Timothy 3:1, 5). These are the evil triads of perversion of the true gift of love. This perversion is what undergirds all the other evils of the end time. It is this erroneous prioritizing of pleasure above God that leads to the last in the list of these evils, when ‘men shall have an appearance of godliness and deny the power of God over their lives’ (II Timothy 3:5). The present time in Nigeria and globally has been more perilous than ever in the history of human existence, characterized with unprecedented and strange occurrences within the church and the larger society. In contemporary Nigerian society, wanton killings, suicide bombing, Christian persecutions, corruption in both secular and ecclesiastical leadership, and social upheaval are pervasive and ever increasing.

This study explores the Pauline eschatological prediction of the *καιροὶ χαλεποί*—perilous times when men will become lovers of self, lovers of money, and lovers of pleasure more than God (II Timothy 3:1,2,4), and their manifestation on the socio-political, economic and spiritual landscape of modern Nigerian society in the past Ten (10) years. Qualitative data were obtained from relevant biblical textual analysis, related literatures, participant observation, in-depth interview and 2 sessions of Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The Social media contents analyzed covered religious activities in the global Christian community, while the sample populations were drawn from the Nigerian society.

The objective of this study is to bring to the fore some contextual, exegetical significance of this predictions and to discourse the contemporary relevant reconsidering observable end time events using Christian theology and social ethics as parameters. Following these, the Pastoral context for securing the end –time church from this evil triad of ‘love of self, money and pleasure’ is presented.

The following research questions will therefore be investigated in other to achieve the above objectives: What is the exegetical significance of Pauline prediction of men becoming lovers of self, money and pleasure more than God? How does this eschatological position of Apostle Paul play out in contemporary Nigeria and on global scene? What are the dimensions to these end time melancholy forecasts on the church community? And finally, how should the church and individual Christian respond to these evils of the end time?

Exegetical Review of II Timothy 3:2, 4

Apostle Paul’s warning of the evil that will besiege the last days can be seen or interpreted as events that invariably will characterize the entire globe, wherever mankind can be found. The apocalyptic warning focuses on what shall become of ... ‘men’ or ... ‘mankind’- *Anthropos*, or the generality of the human race; within or outside of the church as becoming ... ‘lovers of themselves...unholy....having a form of godliness but denying the power of God thereof’(II Timothy 3:1-5). The Apostle Paul in this his last letter and legacy not only to his

¹ David G. Horrell., *Introduction to the Study of Paul* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 133-135.

spiritual son, Timothy, but to the body of Christ was consumed and preoccupied with the urgent need of the church to prepare for this end-time calamities as an Apostle of Christ to his church. He saw it as his divinely assigned duty, to warn the church of the coming evils that he had already seen manifesting and festering in the 'latter days' of the end of his own lifetime and of his son-Timothy days. This evil, according to Paul, will intensify in the approaching 'last days' of the church. He listed these corruptions and warned that Timothy, and by extension, the future church of any period, must be wary of and protect itself from them because this corruption will invariably invade and characterize men in the church also. On this, Paul Kretzmann comments, thus:

...In those days there will be upon the Christians dangerous times, characterized not only by a moral degeneracy of the human race in general, but also of the so-called visible Church. Cp. Matt.24, 12. 23.24.²

Text: II Timothy 3:2

1.) 'For men will be **lovers of self, lovers of money**...(RSV)

Ἔσονται γὰρ οἱ ἄνθρωποι **φιλάυτοι, φιλάργυροι**, (Greek Rendition)

The Greek word **Φιλάυτοι** is translated as lovers of self:

'Lovers of their own selves' – **Φιλάυτοι** (*philautos* from *phileo* means have great affection for or be friend to *autos* which means self) is an adjective which means literally loving oneself, selfish, intent on one's own interests or concerned solely with one's own desires, needs, or interests. Only here in the New Testament and not in the Septuagint.³

Adam Clarke comments that this implies being 'selfish, studious of one's own interest, and regardless of the welfare of all mankind.'⁴ That men will be lovers of self', according to Kretzman, this phrase in the bad sense, connotes egoism and self-centeredness which he refers to as being the main characteristic of men that Apostle Paul is talking about here. And it is this self-love that is causing them to seek only their own advantage and ignoring the needs of their neighbours.⁵ Albert Barnes' observes that **Φιλάυτος** does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament and that here as a leading trait of last days features, means a lover of oneself, 'selfish'. He, however, argues that on a healthy and positive note, love of self leads us to secure our salvation, and such love of self is proper. According to Barnes, this love of self, however, as used by Apostle Paul in the text under consideration interferes with the rights and comforts of others; which makes self the central and leading object of living; and which tramples on all that would interfere with that. Barnes surmises that the preponderance of this base, hateful

² Paul E. Kretzman, "Commentary of the Bible: 2 Timothy 3:2", *Kretzman's Popular Commentary*, Accessed September 27, 2024, <https://www.kretzmannproject.org>.

³ Austin Precept, "2 Timothy 3:1-2 Commentary", *Precept Austin Verse by Verse Commentary by Book*, Accessed September 26, 2024, https://www.preceptaustin.org/2_timothy31-5.

⁴ Adams Clarke, "2Timothy 3:2 Clarke's Commentary," Accessed September 26, 2024, https://www.biblehub.com/commentaries/clarke/2_timothy/3.htm.

⁵ Paul Kretzman, "Commentary of the Bible: 2 Timothy 3:2", *Kretzman's Popular Commentary*, Accessed September 27, 2024, <https://www.kretzmannproject.org>.

and narrow passion called love of self, leaves no room for one to doubt the correctness of the prophecy of the Apostle that it would exist 'in the last time'.⁶

The point of the above scholars is that altruism will no longer be found in the disposition of people. Rather, selfishness will invariably become the order of the day. On a practical term, in its most subtle form, being a friend of oneself or lovers of oneself can be seen in society in the character on the road that thinks he owns the entire road and that all must get out of his way.⁷

The 'love of self', being the lead character in this end time evil traits, strongly implies that at the roots of all other dark characters listed as end time feature lies 'love of self or selfishness.

The word **Φιλαργυροι** in the Greek is translated to mean Lovers of money:

Etymologically, **Φιλαργυρος φιλαργυροη** is from **φιλος'αργυρος**, meaning loving money or avaricious.⁸ According to Vincent Marvin, **φιλάργυροι** is better translated as 'lovers of money' because love of money, which is from the noun **φιλάργυριά** (as used in I Timothy 6:10) and covetousness, are not synonyms. Covetous is **Πλεονεκτής**.⁹ In his submission, however, Paul Kretzman evaluates the end time trait, *Lovers of money they will be*, as synonymous with covetousness which he further describes as 'one form of selfishness'. For these corrupt people, money and wealth being the sum and substance of all happiness to them.¹⁰ Kretzman adds that the second trait 'lovers of money' is more attached to 'love of self' and both twin sisters are inseparably the roots of all other evil traits.¹¹ Buttressing this salient point further Kretzman opines that:

These two points, however, selfishness and avarice, are the roots from which such a behavior is developed to cause the dissolution of all social relationships. For it follows, first of all, that they become boastfully proud..., are haughty... For which reason the next step is their becoming blasphemers...desecrating everything that is holy.¹²

Mathew Henry corroborating Kretzman compares 'love of self' with 'love of money'. He comments that:

Self-love brings in a long train of sins and mischiefs. When men are lovers of themselves, no good can be expected from them, as all good may be

⁶ Albert Barnes, *2 Timothy 3: Barnes Notes on the Whole Bible*, Accessed September 26, 2024, https://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/2_timothy/3.htm.

⁷ John Wesley, "Commentary on 2 Timothy 3:2", *John Wesley's Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*, Accessed December 13, 2023, <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/wen/2-timothy-3.html.1765>.

⁸ Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon, Accessed February 21, 2024, <https://www.blueletterbible.org/resources/lexical/thayers.cfm>

⁹ Vincent Marvin, "2 Timothy 3:2," *Vincent's Word Studies*, https://biblehub.com/commentaries/vws2_timothy/3.htm.

¹⁰ Paul Kretzman, "Commentary of the Bible: 2 Timothy 3:2," *Kretzman's Popular Commentary*.

¹¹ Paul Kretzman, "Commentary of the Bible: 2 Timothy 3:2," *Kretzman's Popular Commentary*.

¹² Paul Kretzman, "Commentary of the Bible: 2 Timothy 3:2," *Kretzman's Popular Commentary*.

expected from those who love God with all their hearts. When covetousness generally prevails, when every man is for what he can get and for keeping what he has, this makes men dangerous to one another and obliges every man to stand on his guard against his neighbor.¹³

In practical sense, in human society today, this does not have to be a deep love for money, as found in the super greedy or avarice society, but it also relates to anyone that has an undue friendship with money.

According to Torrey, many churches are in this boat today as they raise funds and build buildings for the betterment of the institution rather than for the purpose of extending the spiritual kingdom of God.¹⁴

Text: II Timothy 3: 4-5

2.) ...treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, **lovers of pleasure** rather than lovers of God (RSV)

Προδόται προπετεῖς, Τετυφωμένοι, **Φιλήδονοι** μᾶλλον, Φιλόθεοι (Greek Rendition)

Φιλήδονοι (*philedonoi*) is the Greek adjective used by Apostle Paul to describe men as 'lovers of pleasure'. It can also mean those who have gratification of the natural desire, "lusts" in KJV (Titus 3:3; James. 4:1, 3).¹⁵ Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:4, used the Greek description of those who choose to love God (**φιλόθεοι**) in contrast to those who choose to love pleasure (**Φιλήδονοι**).¹⁶ We do not have to choose between pleasure and God. Serving God is the ultimate pleasure (Psalm 16:11), but we do have to choose between the *love* of pleasure and the *love* of God.¹⁷ Rick Renner expounds more on μᾶλλον ("more than"):

Paul wrote that people will be lovers of pleasure "more than" lovers of God. The words "more than" are a translation of the Greek word *mallon*, which draws a drastic comparison between two points, denoting something that is *extremely different* in comparison to something else. In context, this means people will be *excessive* lovers of pleasure — *much, much more* than they are lovers of God. In fact, their desire for their own

¹³ Mathew Henry, "Commentary on 2 Timothy 3:2," *Matthew Henry Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible* Accessed September 27, 2024,

https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/2Ti/2Ti_003.cfm

¹⁴ Reuben A. Torrey, "Commentary on 2 Timothy 3: 1," *The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*, Accessed December 22, 2023, <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/eng/tsk/2-timothy-3.html>.

¹⁵ A. T. Robertson, "Commentary on 2 Timothy 3: 1," *Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament* (Broadman press, 1932), 33, Renewal 1960, Accessed January 10, 2024, <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/rwp/2-timothy-3.html>.

¹⁶ A. T. Robertson, "Commentary on 2 Timothy 3:1," 33.

¹⁷ David Guzik, "Enduring Word Bible Commentary," Accessed January 15, 2024, <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/2-timothy-3/>

pleasure will be so great that it will *far surpass* their devotion, respect, and service to God.¹⁸

A Theological Assessment of the Evidence for the Last Days' Vices, the Evil Triad- "Love of Self, Money and Pleasure," in Nigerian Society and Global Christian Community

Here, the primary focus is on the phenomena that are evidenced in last day's corruption of human society, prophesied by Apostle Paul in II Timothy 3:2&4. These will be identified as they play out in modern Nigerian society and the global Christian community. Theological evaluation of these unethical occurrences and antithetical disposition of men within and outside the church are attempted below. The understanding derived from their contextual and exegetical analysis above shall be applied in the following discussion.

'Men shall be lovers of themselves, lovers of money or covetous'—II Timothy 3:2

Misplacement of priority in putting self and mammon at the central stage of an individual life is the manifestation of the above prediction. The broad theme of misplaced priority is what captures this love of self and love of money. It is striking and instructive that 'love for self' is listed first in the categories of these vices that will characterize men in the last days. Love for self implies that self is the only object of affection and affinity excluding others, where altruism is no longer the goal. This is what is known generally as selfishness, self-centeredness and egoism. Apostle Paul, by divine revelation well located this corruption of human heart as the first and harbinger of other evils that follow in the list. The second vice that follows immediately is 'love of money' which he had earlier in I Timothy 6:10 described as 'the root of all evil'. In this wise, both vices are twin sisters or double-edged weapon of the end time mass destruction in the society. In modern Nigerian society, it is not a strange observation or unfavorable comment to say that love of self and love for money has taken over and taken captive most of the people. Daily lives are led in pursuit of untoward self-interests that spare no thoughts for the good of others, not even close relations, friends, business associates, neighbors, parishioners, church leaders, or other members of the larger society. Such 'love of self only' driven by passion is mostly to actualize the love for money for which all manners of inhumane and unprecedented acts of violence are perpetrated.

At the home front the media continue to report cases of parents that sold their children to interested buyers including to those who will dismember the children for further sale of human body parts to make money by mystical means tagged 'ritual money' in Nigerian society. The heartless parents, who are without natural affection (II Timothy 3:3) and the reckless buyers (II Timothy 3:4) go into all of these, just for pecuniary gain. Sometimes, both parents agree to do this, blaming their conscience on poverty and the need to have money to take care of the remaining children.

Today, the church is synonymous with money making venture, because everything is monetized including 'special prayers'; 'prophetic declaration'; '*papa's blessings*'; 'special

¹⁸ Rick Renner, *Lovers of Pleasure More Than Lovers of God*, Accessed June 7, 2024, <https://renner.org/article/lovers-of-pleasure-more-than-lovers-of-god/>

anointing' and 'seed sowing'. The preacher passes on the false doctrine of transactional gospel to twist the arms of the unwary but trusting church members that their monetary offering determines the outcome of their prayers. This is another dimension to the unhealthy attachment money and consuming greed manifesting in the church in merchandise of the means of grace. Apostle Paul in another breath condemns such practices and deplores those corrupt church ministers as those who think godliness is a means to financial gain (I Timothy 6:6).

Every motivation, exhortation, religious ritual is built around money. Sometimes the parishioners are heavily taxed with specified amount of money expected from them within a specified period.¹⁹ What further makes this practice devoid of clean hands and holy heart is when such monies are diverted from the godly kingdom project presented to the people as church mandate, to actualize selfish agenda or cater to fulfill some personal desire of the clergy spurred by covetousness. Oyewale Titilayo a Seminarian in her reaction to the implication of 'love of money' manifesting as undue and unhealthy emphasis on money in today's churches reports that:

The effects of the financial stress and burden that most church members experience is often a deterrent factor from regular church attendance to have some respite or avoid embarrassment if and when confronted with their expected financial obligation.²⁰

At the worst end of these 'love of money' and 'love of self only' are instances when the ministers have actually robbed members of their money which is entrusted to them for some business purposes, procurement of travelling papers, or importation of vehicles as regularly reported in the newspapers, social media platform and by personal experience.²¹ When it gets to this publicity level, the secular society holds the church in derision, mocks her leadership. Church members bury their heads in shame and some thereby have the justified reason for their lack of interest in religion.

The Decalogue was given to the Old Testament believers as God's law that provides godly principle for divinely approved God-Man relationship and Man-Man dealings in the society. Its principles are relevant and valuable in modern society. This is the moral theology it lays down: 'You shall not covet ... You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Exodus 20:13-17; Leviticus 19:18). In the same vein, self-centeredness and covetousness are both legislated against.

This is a theocratic legislation which moral principles still holds as Christ himself said he came to fulfill the law and not to destroy it (Mathew 5:17). This law was fulfilled in Christ in his teachings to his disciples and by extension to the New Testament Christians (Galatians 5:14), when he warned that: ' You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Luke 10:27; Roman

¹⁹ Adebisi Kehinde, *A Seminary Student in Personal Discussion with the Author* (Ibadan: Nigeria, June 11, 2019).

²⁰ Oyewale Titilayo, *A Seminary Student in Personal Discussion with author* (Ogbomoso: Nigeria, August 25, 2019).

²¹ Focus Group Discussions on 'Experiential evidence for Perilous Times in Nigeria' at Christian Theological Seminary, Ibadan, Nigeria, June 7, 2019.

13:9-10) and... 'beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses' (Luke 12:15), which are mundane. The Holy Spirit inspired the Apostles to communicate God's moral standard to the church and in this context, the church was instructed that: 'For the love of money is the root of all evil: which some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows' (I Timothy 6:10).

The whole chapter of 1 Corinthians 13 was devoted to instructing the body of Christ on the attributes of true love as opposed to 'love for self only' which is a corruption of true love that Paul describes as: 'Love (God's love in us) does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking'... (I Corinthians 13:4, 5). The moral theology of these scriptures cited above establish that the first two vices of 'lovers of self,' and 'lovers of money' that will characterize men and constitute the perilous time of the last days in modern Nigeria and globally, are antithetical to the tenor, teachings and themes of the Christian faith. This, notwithstanding, is the growing influence of these evils and the increasing number of people in the church, especially those who are already manifesting these end time features.

Biblical scholars and Sociologists both in the past and in contemporary times have taken up serious warnings on the evil of avarice and its consequences for the Christian and the generality of human society. D'Souza rightly observes that avarice is arguably the fundamental reason for many of the problem we face today, and such arguable outcomes of human greed are theft, murder and other crimes, wars, extreme poverty, social instability, kidnapping, and underdevelopment.²²

Olaiya exposes the biblical concept of greed as he pontificates thus:
There are many scriptures in the Bible where we encounter words that essentially relate avarice or greed, respectively to materialism, covetousness and cupidity, love of money or possessions, and attachment to money.

Since these terms have similar meanings to a certain extent, we use them interchangeably. Generally, they indicate the tendency to want more than one needs, emphasizing over-indulgence and the desire to gather mere material goods (Maximus the Confessor).²³

To Olaiya, greed is idolatry (Colossians 3:5; Ephesians 5:5), unfaithfulness to God and worship of another god, and mammon (Mathew 6:19-24; Luke 16:13); alluding to Chrysostom, Mammon is a Syrian word which means wealth or treasury money earned dishonestly referring to the rival god whom greedy people love, trust, obey and serve. He reiterates Thomas Aquinas opinion that 'avarice denies a person mental quietude since one defers to gold than that which prosper to God', and further re-echoes Longham assessments of avarice as having corrupting effects on a person's character and spiritual life leading to vices that harm society and economy.²⁴ Greed, according to Nikelly, is an immoral impediment to

²² Jeevan D'souza, "Greed: Crises, Causes, and Solutions," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 5, no.7(2015): 1-6.

²³ Olaiya, "Guide Against Avarice: Examination of Mathew 6:11," *RELIGION*:108.

²⁴ Olaiya, "Guide Against Avarice: Examination of Mathew 6:11," 116

personal and societal flourishing.²⁵For Christians, greed can be cured from one's own mind or heart by faith in God and by developing virtues such as generosity, sincere love and modesty, namely, spirituality instead of materialistic values.²⁶ Many religions and psychologists have criticized the attachment of happiness to material goods and have advocated for focusing on the spiritual and moral life.²⁷

Men shall be unholy or godless...lovers of pleasure more than God...have a form of godliness but deny its power. II Timothy 3:5

Loss of faith in and taste for the sacred, spiritual or religion is gradually seeking to invade Nigerian religious pluralistic society. This grouping of what men shall become in the last days is characterized by trait that directly bothers on spiritual relationship with God, or things of the spirit. Godlessness manifests as men becoming unholy, and misplacement of priority is seen where proximate materialistic concern is placed above and prioritized beyond ultimate spiritual or eternal concern. In a Focus Group Discussion where *evidence for lovers of pleasure more than God* was the focus, some instances of these were raised.

The more subtle and insidious of these manifestations of loving pleasure and self-satisfaction more than love and concern for God cited from the general society include these narratives:

The international or Africa football matches between Nigeria and other countries that fell on a Sunday morning usually negatively impart worship service. Many Christians would prefer to stay back home to watch the football match and miss the Sunday worship service in their churches. Where such Christians that stay back home are Christian workers or church leaders, they chose to let the body of Christ suffer from their deliberate absence that Sunday worship service.

In the same context, Conrad Mdewe, a Baptist Minister in Zambia sadly reported that:

One Sunday in the early years of Kabwata Baptist Church...The building was open, but the place had not been arranged...We started the service very late. By the time I got into the pulpit to preach, I failed to preach and started crying. I wept because my own church members had voted with their feet. Football was more important than the worship of the living God. How could I continue with the sermon that I had prepared to preach? I could not. I could only weep. ²⁸

The above observation may be trivial; nevertheless, it was a great test of preference and commitment to fellowship or worship service day for many Christians who are 'lovers of football' on such decisive day. This is probably to "justify" Jesus' allusion of 'give unto Caesar

²⁵ Nickelly, "The pathogenesis of greed: Causes and consequences," *International Journal of Applied Psychoanalytic Studies* 3, no.1 (March 2006): 65. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aps.50>.

²⁶ Olaiya, "Guide Against Avarice: Examination of Mathew 6:11", 116

²⁷ Manfred, 'The Greed Syndrome', *SSRN Electronic Journal International*, (January 2016): 8-9, <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2766233>.

²⁸ Focus Group Discussion on 'Evidence for lovers of pleasure more than God' at Sacred Christian College of Theology and Seminary, Ashi, Bodija: Ibadan, July 28, 2020.

what is Caesar's and give unto God what belongs to God'. It almost became a matter of Joshua in the Old Testament scriptures confronting the indecisive nation of Israel when he told them: 'choose this day who you will serve, but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord'. Many church parishioners, at least, for the day, the love for football, football stars or celebrities, or the Nigerian National football team, was chosen and demonstrated as a possible or potential rival for fellowship with the body of Christ, Worship and other spiritual activities that occurred that very Sunday. The test to decide what takes the highest priority and commitment in a Christian life, love of pleasure or love of God, comes when one faces a choice between convenience or the cross, a choice between comfort and crucifixion, a choice between popularity and persecution, and a choice between familial relationship and faithfulness to ones' consecration to God. Where our loyalty lies can easily be revealed in such petty issues. The Lord has set the standard: 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters –yes, even his own life, such a person cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:26). 'Whoever does not take up his/her cross and follow me is not worthy of me (Mathew 10:38). Rick Renner insights on pleasure seeking in the last days is relevant here:

...people will be *excessive* lovers of pleasure –*much, much, more* than they are lovers of God. In fact, their desire for their own pleasure will be so great that it will far surpass their devotion, respect, and service to God. In the last days, people's thinking will not be ruled by what is morally right or morally wrong or what is pleasing or displeasing to God, but by the question: How will this decision or action affect my own personal comfort, pleasure, or happiness?²⁹

We are entertained in churches today by comedians and their filthy 'Christian' joke. We are excited as women 'preachers' and worship leaders in skimpy dresses turns the pulpits to their show business and are gyrating to their rock 'n' roll metal music to the cheering of the audience³⁰.

An Ethical Assessment of the Evidence for Apostle Paul's Prediction of Last Days' Vices-the Evil Triad, in Nigerian Society

The sign or evidence of these last days' perilous times abound in different dimensions of untoward human behavior, corruption of character and perverted disposition that will dominate and direct human relationship in every sphere of existence; physical, spiritual, and relational etc. These evil triad of love of self, money and pleasure are evaluated in the context of African cum Christian social-ethics.

... for men shall become lovers of self, lovers of money...

African ethics as social and humanitarian ethics is driven by altruism, fraternity, notion of the common good. This is what directs and dictates the values and morality of traditional Nigerian society, as opposed to what now obtains in its modern settings. The point being that the value for fraternity encourages less egoism and self-pursuits such that people work

²⁹ Mbewe, "A Letter from Kabwata: To go to Church or watch football," Accessed 2, June 2024, <http://www.conradmbewe.com/2017/03/to-go-to-church-or-wa>.

³⁰ Renner, "Lovers of Pleasure More Than Lovers of God."

against being 'lovers of self' which negatively impacts on their acquaintances, neighbors, friends or family members. This cherished moral value for fellow-feeling in traditional setting is grossly found wanting in the contemporary Nigerian society.

Here, it is instructive and compelling to point out that the subversion of a pivotal African socio-ethical value, *altruism* is the reason the majority of Nigerian in modern times has become 'lovers of self'. The 'love for self' is manifesting in the negative context of undermining societal or communal peace, progress and prosperity, in order to achieve selfish satisfaction. This 'love of self' is the first corruption of mankind that Apostle Paul prophesied and listed as an end time feature of perilous times. In modern Nigerian society, people are motivated by self-love, so much that human life is taking wantonly to accomplish or actualize selfish ambition. In the bid to protect self, others' interests are not considered but jettisoned and selfish ambition is pursued vigorously and projected, regardless of the obvious potential dangers, and damages it portends for society.

The violation of African ethical values for honesty, perseverance, and simplicity of life can explain the manifestation of covetousness and love of money that has gone viral in the Nigerian society today. This biblical prophetic warning for the last days, which is playing out in the Nigerian society can be attributed to a corruption and erosion of traditional African social ethics that undergirds altruism, the notion of common goods and simplicity of life. In the Nigerian political setting, some leaders of the country have amassed national wealth that economic experts have calculated to be worth a year budget of another small country in Africa, or what their state could not generate as Internally Generated Revenue (IGR).³¹ Dezeani Allison-Maduweke, a former minister for petroleum under the administration of former President Goodluck Jonathan, looted the nation's treasury mercilessly because of her insatiable appetite for luxury, unhindered access to gratify her tastes, self-actualization and aggrandizement.³² At the religious level, some ecclesiastical leaders are consumed and driven by self-love and love for money at the expense of their subjects. They feed fat on their poor, weak and impoverished congregation, pushing for their own personal needs and not ready to sacrifice luxury or even necessities, as sometimes may be required by leadership. The loss of grip on the 'notion of common good', altruism, honesty, perseverance and simplicity of life as basic African ethical value is the bane of modern Nigerian society that is given to self-centeredness and craves for money. This is fulfilling the biblical prediction of a society characterized by members who are 'lovers of selves' and 'lovers of money.'

...Men shall become lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God

To put pleasure at the center of Christian morality or conditions for conforming to the law of God is what Apostle Paul warns the church of, in this prediction. Benthan and his disciples, such as John Stuart Mills, argued that there is one ultimate moral principle, namely 'the principle of utility.'

³¹ Focus Group Discussion on 'Evidence for lovers of pleasure more than God.'

³² K. Nwezeh and H. Shittu, "Nigeria: U.S.\$400 Billion looted from Treasury-Govt," All Africa, September 13, 2019, <https://allafrica.com/stories/201909130041.html>.

In short, according to this school of social ethics, the primary rule of morality is to act, to bring about a situation in which the instinct for pleasure is satisfied as they can be. They consider morality as nothing more than an attempt to bring about as much pleasure as possible in this world. These scholars termed their position as 'Utilitarian Ethics.'³³ This is exactly the warning from Apostle Paul that utilitarian ethicists are promoting in making pleasure the cornerstone in their ethical theory. People's desire can be absurd and undesirable. An unsanctified desire which is not guided by divine enablement in conformity to God's law may be detrimental in the long run, even if it appears to produce pleasure or seeming happiness for all in the present time. The utilitarian morality espouses that the greatest happiness for the largest number of people is the greatest or most desired reward or pleasure in this world. The existential realities of life show that in certain instances, pleasure and happiness are irreconcilable. Not all pleasure brings happiness. St Augustine observed that one cannot obtain true happiness by following human inclination, true happiness can only be found in accepting Jesus Christ as one personal Saviour.³⁴ According to the Psalmist: 'you will show me the path of life; in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore' (Psalm 16:11). This proves that God is not opposed to his people getting pleasure or happiness; they are available at his right hand to give them.

We submit that Pleasure, therefore, must be sought or pursued as reward from God for doing what is right in the way he expects, according to his moral law. The Utilitarian assumption that pleasure and happiness are synonymous is against Christian morality. However, we submit that it is only by subjecting such desire for pleasure or happiness to God's morality that one can guarantee true, healthy, and positive pleasure, both in the short term and in the long run.

The Pastoral Context for Securing the Church against the End-Time Corruption of Self-indulgent love of money and Pleasure

We shall now engage the Pastoral attitudes and approach to handling the evil triad of "Love of Self, Money and Pleasure." We shall give a cursory look into the New Testament understanding of love as against its perversion in self-indulgency. The reality of human needs, the position of the Bible on money or riches and how it can become the pitfall of greed is briefly outlined. Also, an allusion is made to the corruption that comes from self-indulgent love of money and pleasure-seeking lifestyle. A few empirical evidence in the local church are reported. Some Scriptural insights to avoid the pitfall of greed and lust for mundane things are highlighted at appropriate places in this discussion.

The second part of Jesus' summary of the law and the prophets is to 'love your neighbor as yourself' (Mathew 22:34-40). This love-command of Jesus proves that loving oneself is not always a negative thing to do, because that was the minimum standard against which one is to love his neighbor. This presupposes that there are two sides to self-loving. The positive side is sacrificial, seeking the good of others as it will do for self, which is the love for neighbor the Bible admonishes. The other side that is negative seeks to advance self and selfish

³³ Chironda, "Nigeria: How much Did Former Oil Minister 'Steal'?" All Africa, September 29, 2017, <https://allafrica.com/stories/201709290489.html>.

³⁴ Isaac Olarewaju, *Ethics: Theological and Non-Theological* (Ibadan: Harmonious Publications, 2004), 43.

interests without due or necessary consideration for the welfare of others or even at the expense of it. The fellow who is not happy with himself and does not love himself enough to endure hardship to have a meaningful life, will also not love himself enough to be committed to the good of others who are his neighbor and who may need him. Therefore, God expects us to love ourselves so that we can transfer same love to others. The love for God in the heart will mold the heart to reflect same love through self to others. This is why loving God with all our hearts, soul, strength and spirit comes first as the most important requirement for loving neighbors as the law of love demands. Derek however clarifies this concept of 'self-love' in his submission that:

Although the self-love implication derived from the biblical command to "love your neighbor as yourself" is still currently debatable from a biblical context, there is no debate among Christians regarding the Great Command to love God first. Pope (1991) discussed Thomas Aquinas' concept of "proper self-love" as a process of genuine love based on loving God first as opposed to "improper self-love" which is associated with "living God as a secondary good" (p.387). The simple implication derived from Pope's thinking is that there is a "right" and "wrong" way of loving oneself. A less value-laden way of thinking about his concept is to distinguish between an adaptive form of self-love compared to a less adaptive, or even maladaptive one.³⁵

The virtue of love is the New Testament ethical values for directing a Christian social relationship with others within the community of faith or outside it. Churches should guard against the end time evil of love of self, money and pleasures. Self-care, comfort of food and shelter are not negotiable for a natural, meaningful, normal and memorable lifetime on earth. The Scriptures itself laid the foundation for the Economist, Maslow's theory when it underscores food and raiment as the basic human need that must be met for existential satisfaction about life: *but having food and covering we shall be therewith content* (I Timothy 6:8).

The Lord gives the church his fortification against this evil triad of "love of self, money and pleasure" by prescribing to us the cross, a symbol of self-denial, death to self-will, embrace of suffering, shame and stigma when it means being in the will of God. The Lord assures us of his provision for the necessities of life. He said the unbelievers who have no divine insurance seek these things but our father in heaven knows that we have needs of them (Mathew 6:3). "Be content with such things as you have" (Hebrews 13:5) is the scripture prescription for the malady of indulgence and covetousness. Hence, being content is the answer to the question of human greed and self-indulgent love and materialism. Beyond the basic needs of life the Lord may choose to entrust us with abundance in other material blessings of life. However on the other side the Scripture cautions that, *For the life is more than food and the body more than raiment* (Luke 12:23), it provides the balance view we should all have, that, *Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions* (Luke 12:15) and sets for us the priority that *you cannot serve God and be enslaved to Money* (Mathew 6:24). These scriptures are axiomatic and conclusive.

True and lasting freedom from love of money, self-indulgent and mundane things come from seeing the limitations and setback they bring to one's life. They becloud your clear, scriptural understanding of what true and fulfilled living is from God's perspectives.

³⁵ Isaac Olarewaju, *Ethics: Theological and Non-Theological*.

Amassing wealth, pursuing materialism, and seeking to gratify self, robs you of trust and security in God as having unfailing control over your life and future. A soul blinded by love of money and self-serving materialistic lifestyle is robbed of the joy and freedom of being an effective instrument in God's hand to meet others' need and share in his work of saving humanity. This fellow only builds treasure for himself on earth being not rich toward God. He misses a lifetime partnership opportunity with God to invest in his kingdom for an eternal dividend. Jesus warns of the certain risk of 'moth', 'rust' and 'theft' that would eventually corrupt treasures on earth when a man lays up such treasures for himself, self-indulgent purposes or self-security (Mathew 6:19-20). The evil of money has its grip over the soul of a man when money is obsessively desired, avidly pursued and mindlessly served. Loving money for its sake, the pleasure it can bring, the affluence it can afford and the fabulous lifestyle it engenders is the observable dimension to this love of money at this end-time. In this context, the love of money rules and controls the desires, tastes and pursuits of its victims. The fellow whose heart has been captured by the love of money finds it difficult to part with it if it will not serve self or affords self some gratification, recognition, or actualization. The love of money is a leading trait of the evils of the end-time that will plague the church and the world (II Timothy 3:1-5).

There is a common misquote in the church of Apostle Paul's warning *that money is the roots of all evil* whereas it is "the love of money" that was identified as the harbinger of all evil (I Timothy 6:10). Money is amoral, neutral, neither good nor bad but assumes the nature or identity of the owner. In the hands of a godly, kingdom minded, selfless servant of the Lord, money can be an instrument of righteousness to alleviate poverty, feed the hungry, support missionaries or pay hospital bill for a helpless fellow. In Luke 16:19, the Lord says: "I say unto you, make to yourselves friends by means of the money of unrighteousness, that when it fails, they may receive you into everlasting habitation." This verse can be understood as:

Take your money which is basically unrighteous...or non-righteous
and
use it to make for yourselves friendship that when your money fails,
they will receive you into everlasting habitation. Invest your money in
the souls of men and women who will someday greet you in heaven
with
Thanksgiving when you arrive. What an incredible thought, to take
your
money and purchase eternal friendships by investing in the kingdom.³⁶

Money, even though it may be judged as having no inherent righteous property, can be invested in righteous course that has eternal value and as well be laid up not for self on earth but in heaven's treasury for maximum security from earthly corruption. Laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven is seeking the kingdom of God first and not putting self-first. When God himself and his kingdom becomes our priority, pursuits, pleasure, and purpose in all life endeavors, nothing holds its grip over our hearts not to deploy our material treasures,

³⁶ Derek de la Pena, "Loving Thyself and Well-being: What Does God Have to Do with it," *The Journal of Faith, Education, and Community*, 3, Issue 1, Article 4(December 2019):3, <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/jfec/vol3/iss1/4>.

practice self-denial of even legitimate pleasure, or invest our money in other to reaching the lost souls and supporting other worthy course.

It is erroneous for the Pastor of a local church to use the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19) to support or promote penury with its de-humanization of humanity resulting from lack of basic amenities; food and raiment. We do not please the Lord or qualify for heaven just because our lives here are miserable, wretched and battered. There is nothing in Scripture that prevents us from seeking to improve our lots on earth, to the contrary, we are enjoined to work with our hands so we may also have to give to others and not be at the beggarly receiving end (Ephesians 4:28). God gives us richly all things to enjoy (I Timothy 6:17) so he is not at variance with his children having stuff to make their lives pleasant or enjoyable. The Parable of Talents approves of us investing our resources, skills or even money for profits (Matthew 25:14-30). There are enough scriptural illustrations or teachings to shun laziness, loafing, wastefulness, unproductiveness, being burdensome, and not providing for one's house etc. (Proverbs 12:24, 18:9, 22:29, 26:25; Romans 12:1, II Thessalonians 3:10, I Timothy 5:8).

The obvious fact is that many Pastors of local churches in our society put themselves in a place of temptation to manipulate their people for money. The context of 'full time' ministry should be redefined especially where the local church is not financially buoyant to support the needs of its minister. Church ministers are devising all kinds of tainted techniques and unscriptural practices to rip off their people and the public. They make money off the back of poor people in their circle of influence. Two reasons for this untoward covetous practice are, first, laziness, unproductiveness and genuine lack of money to meet their basic needs, and second, covetousness of the greedy Pastors to keep up their lavish tastes and ostentatious lifestyles. Many of these ministers are not willing to work with their hands even when their economic situation and consequent family distress is harsh. They are being misguided by a warp mindset that God has not called them to 'secular job' as a 'full time' church pastor. Some others are put under guilt that makes it impracticable to invest their money, academic knowledge or business skill in profitable ventures that do not interfere with their pastoral responsibility to their local assembly because their time is still in their control and their physical presence is not necessary for such ventures. The church must also be protected from ungodly and imbalanced 'prosperity messages' that make merchandize of the gift of God. Greed, covetousness, materialism and love of money, are the outcome of such 'transactional gospel'. If this counsel is not given deserve consideration by the local church when and where necessary, we will continue to witness more robbery, sheep fleecing, milking the poor, devouring the house of the widow and 'simony' couch as 'prophetic offering'; 'fund raising'; 'honorarium'; seed sowing'; 'sowing into the anointing' and other scripturally unfounded creativity unimaginable in the church. These and other forms of predatory leadership of ecclesiastical order are those things which Christ condemns with indignation as damnable profanation of his sacred physical and spiritual sanctuary.

There is no gainsaying that greed and covetousness have turned many Pastors to false prophets. A retired military personnel, an old woman, sobbed as she narrated to us her ordeal in the hand of a church minister who she said has turned her into his credit card, abusing his ecclesiastical influence to satisfy his greed, extorting the woman financially.³⁷ A 'General

³⁷ John MacArthur, "Avoiding the Love of Money," Accessed 12, 2024, www.gty.org.

Overseer' of a large congregation that hosted us for a meeting and in a discussion repented of what he now sees as greed and manipulation. He notes that:

I thought it was part of ecclesiastical privileges to enforce it on my people to get across to me a specified amount of money. I would only have to put a call through to them, give them some 'prophetic words' and demand a certain sum as I deem fit. They have no other way around it than to send in the money immediately or as soon as they can do so³⁸.

I am happy to say that your messages on social media have turned me away from this error and I have lost some friends, partners and church members because of stopping such manipulative lifestyle and teaching against it now. This is why I invited your team to give us more spiritual understanding about the mind of God on Christian stewardship and accountability.³⁹

The practice of specifying upfront what honorarium a guest church Minister demand from his host, and in a case we investigated, the standard of the hotel to lodge him, including the size of the hotel swimming pool, tends toward 'Simony' as in Acts 8: 18-19 where money was offered the Apostles by Simon the Sorcerer to buy the gifts of God for merchandize. This also borders on seeking pleasure, making money and self-serving. Perhaps such was invented to forestall previous untoward experiences of poor treatment of invited church ministers by some host ministers or churches. If that is the situation, then it is better to abandon oneself into the hand of the Lord and suffer loss if need be, because he that will save his life shall lose it but he who losses his life for Christ sake shall find it (Mathew 16:25). At this point it is pertinent to point out that it is poor ministerial ethics to not give deserving honor to a guest minister who definitely must have made some sacrifices to be available. The Lord himself approves that "the hireling is worthy of his wages" and "not to muzzle the ox that tread out the corn." (Mathew 10:10; Luke 10:7-8; Leviticus 19:13; I Timothy 5:18).

However, when a church minister as a lifestyle or principle has to demand for incentives or dictate his price before he agrees to be a blessing to the church, and even declining opportunity to preach the gospel because his tastes cannot be met or catered to; it is a subtle and surreptitious manifestation of self-indulgent love of this present world that swayed Demas from the faith (II Timothy 4:10). It is not uncommon to see people leaving their seats to "lay their stuff(money) at the feet of the preacher" while ministering. The people have been erroneously indoctrinated that at some high point in the meeting when they perceived "the move of the Spirit" in giving utterance or eloquence to the minister or in manifestation of physical healings, they can "sow into the anointing in operation" for specific blessings in return. The minister himself would announce: "there is a heavy anointing in the house now, sow into it!" The altar or platform where the minister stands can be seen covered up with money "laid at his feet". The early church practice of "laying their stuff at the feet of the

³⁸ Jesuyemi Christianah (a retired military personnel), in discussion with the author at a Minister's Leadership Summit, Ibadan, Nigeria, May 31, 2024.

³⁹ Alade Ayinde (A General Overseer of a Church in Benin Republic, West Africa), in personal discussion with the Author at Cotonou, Benin Republic, May 28, 2024.

Apostles" (Acts 4:34-35) was done to provide for their communal needs, and their motivation was to ensure no one lack basic needs (Acts 2:44-45). This was driven by unity of spirit "for no one calls what he has his own" (Acts 4:32).

They were not trying to 'tap' into the 'Apostolic anointing,' and the Apostles did not take advantage of the trust in their leadership integrity to mismanage or embezzle the corporate material resources. The end time pernicious spirit of greed is spread from the preacher to the people who may want to 'double' or 'triple' their money or whatever their target is as they gamble around sending their money into different ministries, outside their local assembly, with supposedly heavier 'prosperity anointing'.

The parallel truth is that the rich man in the story of Lazarus does not displease the Lord nor condemned to hell because he has money to spend, comfortable house over his head or he is able to eat three good meals a day. The responsibility for riches, affluence or wealth is weighty and many are not spiritually prepared to bear it (Luke 12; 21; I Timothy 6:17-19). This thus makes it easier for the Camel to go through "the eye of a needle" than for the rich to enter the kingdom of God (Mathew 19:24; Mark 10:25). The Rich fool does not realize his soul security is in being rich toward God and not in the abundance from his field. He also fails to look beyond himself in the consummation of his abundance (Luke 12: 19). This is a misplaced priority of purpose that monetary power and material prosperity often drown its victim in. Apostle James condemns the rich for oppressing the poor; "defrauding their hireling", "heaping treasures together for the last days" and "living in pleasure on the earth and been wanton"; "condemning and killing the just who does not even resist them" (James 5:1-5). It is however unfortunate that money, affluence, pleasure and wealth have caused more spiritual damage, searing the hearts, blinding the eyes and deceiving the soul to choose and live for this present world and denying godliness, than they have positioned men to see their spiritual poverty. Experiences of life continue to show us how pleasure seeking has endangered many good people because of the dominion of sinful pleasure on the fallen nature of man. In contemporary churches, many godly people have also made a shipwreck of their faith by succumbing to the gratifying hegemony of pleasure. Sin truly has pleasure, the Bible does not pretend otherwise, but its pleasure is transients (Hebrew 11: 25) and pales in values to the pleasure derive from being a blessing to others and receiving affirmation from God as a faithful servant at the close of the age.

Men in the postmodern society are particularly lovers of pleasure more than God. They will rather seek to have liberty to go their own way, do their own thing, or live their own life than be compelled otherwise by some supposed godly lifestyle from biblical injunction. Their unbridled desire for pleasure drives them to wife swapping, threesome-involving a third party in sexual intimacy, and violent sexual activities, tying up their partners. It is true that lust, gluttony and greed are the sin of excess. The monomaniacal focus on sensual gratification in our society sears the conscience of most youths, driving them to involve in shady business deals, assassination, child rape, internet scam or pursuing the ungodly lifestyle of Celebrities and Music artistes like Beyonce and Diddy who have sold their souls to Satan for fame. The Church must keep before the eyes of her young people the biblical truths that giving self to pleasure and revelry will eventually destroy desire for godliness. Their prayer life will be weakened, passion for purity will wane, zeal for devotion deflated and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit deadened. Apostle Paul warns through his young minister,

Timothy, every young Christians and ministers in the church: “but she that lives in pleasure or is self-indulgent is dead even when she lives” (1 Timothy 5:).

For those who are entrusted with wealth, Jesus' litmus test for detecting when their heart is taken over by love of money is still: ‘go and sell what you have, give it to the poor and take up your cross and follow me’ (Mathew 9:21). This is a test of how we can easily, quickly and joyfully, respond to the Lord when he places a demand on our money or material things. A check on our heart to see if we are truly confident that God owns and controls all things including material possessions of life. That understanding and confidence of God's sovereignty breaks the heart free from the allurements of riches and temptation of stockpiling, hoarding, or amassing stuff especially because of unforeseen future storm. The Psalmist rings loud and true here when it declares ‘the earth is the Lord's and its fullness thereof’ (Psalm 24:1-2). To those who are craving for money, coveting it and pursuing it because they desire to be rich, Apostle Paul cautions that by so loving money, they are prone to fall into temptation and a snare and into much foolish and hurtful lust which drown men in destruction and perdition. He surmises that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows (I Timothy 6: 9-10). Truly God gives us richly all things to enjoy (I Timothy 6:17b), but that equally enforces on us accountability to God in our enjoyment of the things he richly gives us. Living by the above pastoral admonition can protect us from the evil triads of ‘love of money, self and pleasure.’ Guarding our hearts with the admonition to not seek the good of ourselves but to put others before us, seeking their good and getting to the point we can lay down our lives for the brethren will secure us away from the evil of loving self (Colossians 3: 13; I John 3: 6). Contemporary Christians will not automatically be helped by these scriptures and the pastoral exhortation this study draw out from them without an intentional looking into this law of liberty, internalizing them, and allowing the Holy Spirit to impart our lives with them.

Reflection and Summary of Findings

1. The evil triad of “love of self, money and pleasure” is manifesting already both within the church community and the larger secular society of men.
2. Some activities at the local church level are overtly or covertly in the zone of “men will become lovers of self, lovers of money and lovers of pleasure more than God”.
3. The evil triad of “love of self, money and pleasure” blinds us to what true living is, which is living for God and impacting humanity. It robs us of opportunity of a lifetime partnership with God in kingdom business.
4. There is a biblically approved stance for cultivating self –love, having money, making profits, being rich, or enjoying pleasure and personal comfort derivable from having access to basic existential amenities of life.
5. Therefore, the scriptures should not be twisted to promote laziness, lack of diligence, and complacency with avoidable poor lifestyle under the guise of ‘avoiding’ the pitfall of love of money or worldly pleasure.
6. When we are entrusted with wealth or the goods of this world, the responsibility that comes with it cannot be compromised.
7. Being rich toward God, seeking his kingdom first, laying up treasures in heaven and willingness to distribute are sacrosanct.

Finally, the over-emphasis on wealth, materialism and fabulous lifestyle as evidence of divine approval or strong faith should be scripturally checked and discontinued. The end time church should decry and desist from the prevalence “transactional gospel” that puts God and his means of grace out for sale. The Church to the outsiders is becoming commercial centers where people come to pay for their desired goods and services and leave or stay back for more merchandise. They are never confronted with the Gospel of repentance, new creation realities and discipleship, thereby contributing to the general apathy or Luke-warmness to God and his true worship. The church should keep an eye on itself as this prophesied evil triad-love of self, money and pleasure, and men that are given to it, are already making an in -road into its faith community to corrupt it.

Conclusion

Apostle Paul prophecy of perilous time when men will become lovers of self, money and pleasure more than God (II Timothy 3:1-2, 4) is evidently manifesting in the church and in the larger human society. The study identifies urgent need for sound biblical doctrine in the local church that empowers believers to not fall victim of this end time self –indulgent love of money and erroneous messages calculated to “fleece the sheep”. Also, the practice of “full time ministry” at the Local church may need to be contextually reviewed and adapted to the peculiar situation of the Pastor and/or the local assembly. Church ministers who at any time have capitulated to this end time corruption and have practiced gimmickry, fleecing God’s sheep for self -actualization, money and pleasure under the guise of ministering, raising fund for church project or taking care of the man of God, should repent publicly and amend where possible. The popular American Televangelist and Prosperity preacher, Pastor Benny Hinn has taken a good lead, demonstrating brokenness, godly sorrow and public repentance for ‘transactional gospel message’ and for allowing gimmickry and false prophecy in his meetings.⁴⁰The church calling out such practices and personalities, from redemptive motivation, can save many lives, preachers and the laypersons, as evidence in the case of this godly Televangelist who confessed to have been swayed the second time by pressure. The table of these “money changers” and the “seats of the sellers of dove” in today’s temple or church community must be overturned as Jesus did in his days (Mathew 12:12-13); and the mouth of these gainsayers stopped as Apostle Paul commanded (Titus 1:11).

⁴⁰ “Like a Dog Returning to His Vomit, Benny Hinn Once Again 'Repents' of the Prosperity Gospel,” *The Dissenter*, May 10, 2024. <https://disntr.com/2024/05/10/like-a-dog-returning-to-his-vomit-benny-hinn-once-again-repents-of-the-prosperity-gospel/>.

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Received: 05/07/2024

Accepted: 09/09/2024

Published: 30/09/2024

Abstract

This study shows whether the culture of society can influence the organization, communication and implementation of church management, using the framework created by Geert Hofstede. Hofstede created survey in investigating the variation of values to distinguish between cultures, their impact on etiquette, communication and church management (Hofstede's cultural dimensions). This study was conducted at the GKY BSD church organization located in Bumi Serpong Damai, Tangerang using quantitative research methods from the GLOBE study. The results of the study show that the existing data processing indicates a shift in one of the characteristics of Tionghoa culture in the leadership style of the GKY BSD church organization and supported the existing hypothesis, namely the multicultural Tionghoa Indonesia. This shift is an interesting phenomenon that shows the existence of a multicultural process and provides significant congregation growth from year to year in one of the church branches in BSD, Tangerang.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menunjukkan apakah budaya masyarakat dapat mempengaruhi organisasi, komunikasi dan pelaksanaan manajemen gereja, dengan menggunakan kerangka kerja yang dibuat oleh Geert Hofstede. Hofstede membuat survei dalam menyelidiki variasi nilai untuk membedakan budaya, dampaknya terhadap etiket, komunikasi dan manajemen gereja (dimensi budaya Hofstede). Penelitian ini dilakukan pada organisasi gereja GKY BSD yang berlokasi di Bumi Serpong Damai, Tangerang dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kuantitatif dari studi GLOBE. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengolahan data yang ada menunjukkan adanya pergeseran pada salah satu karakteristik budaya Tionghoa pada gaya kepemimpinan organisasi gereja GKY BSD dan mendukung hipotesis yang ada, yaitu Tionghoa Indonesia yang multikultural. Pergeseran ini merupakan fenomena menarik yang menunjukkan adanya proses multikultural dan memberikan pertumbuhan jemaat yang signifikan dari tahun ke tahun di salah satu cabang gereja di BSD, Tangerang.

Keywords: Hofstede's cultural dimensions, leadership.

Pendahuluan

Indonesia memang dikenal sebagai negara yang kaya akan ragam budaya dan keberagaman yang harmonis. Keberagaman ini tercermin dalam berbagai komunitas dan kelompok masyarakat yang tersebar di seluruh nusantara. Di antara komunitas-komunitas

tersebut, gereja-gereja lokal di Indonesia menonjol karena menggambarkan pluralitas budaya yang unik. Misalnya, gereja-gereja seperti gereja Batak, gereja Sunda, gereja Jawa, gereja Palembang, dan gereja Tionghoa, masing-masing memiliki jemaat yang mengidentifikasi diri mereka dengan latar belakang budaya tertentu. Ini mencerminkan komunitas agama Kristen Protestan dapat dihayati dan diungkapkan dalam konteks budaya yang beragam di Indonesia. Setiap gereja lokal ini tidak hanya menjadi tempat ibadah, tetapi juga pusat kegiatan sosial dan kebersamaan bagi masyarakat yang membagikan nilai-nilai keagamaan dan budaya mereka¹. Hal ini membantu memperkuat jalinan sosial antara anggota komunitas yang berasal dari berbagai latar belakang budaya, seperti yang terjadi dalam komunitas masyarakat lainnya di Indonesia, seperti komunitas suku atau adat daerah tertentu, komunitas olahraga, komunitas kuliner, dan lain sebagainya. Keberagaman budaya ini bukan hanya menjadi kekayaan Indonesia secara sosial dan budaya, tetapi juga merupakan sumber kekuatan yang memperkaya identitas nasional dan mempromosikan toleransi serta penghargaan terhadap perbedaan di antara masyarakat Indonesia.

Indonesia memiliki beragam suku daerah memiliki juga gereja lokal dengan tradisi gereja yang mempengaruhi cara kehidupan sosial, politik, dan spiritual masyarakatnya. Dalam hal ini, peran pemimpin gereja tidak hanya terbatas pada aspek rohani, tetapi juga memainkan peranan krusial dalam membentuk pandangan dan nilai-nilai yang mempengaruhi kehidupan sehari-hari umat, pemimpin memainkan peran khusus yang memberikan pengaruh positif agar nilai-nilai yang ada sejalan dengan visi organisasi². Menurut Wirawan dalam bukunya *Kepemimpinan*, salah satu syarat kepemimpinan yang baik adalah kemampuan untuk melihat dan menerapkan pendekatan sistem dalam berbagai urusan kepemimpinan dalam mengelola komunitasnya menuju visi dan misi yang dia tetapkan bersama³.

Kepemimpinan Gereja

Peter G. Northouse, dalam bukunya *"Kepemimpinan"*, menjelaskan bahwa pendekatan sifat bagi seorang pemimpin bukan melulu dilahirkan (sifat pemimpin yang sudah ada sejak lahir) tetapi juga berproses belajar dari lingkungan, komunitas, kegagalan, pengalaman buruk, pendidikan dan salah satunya dimensi budaya yang memegang peranan penting dalam kepemimpinan dan organisasi⁴, hal ini terbukti dalam adanya beberapa perusahaan yang berumur 450 tahun yang dapat mengubah dunia karena budaya organisasi yang mereka ciptakan sejak awal berdirinya organisasi tersebut seperti J.P Morgan dan Para Yesuit⁵. Pemimpin mereka merupakan salah satu aspek dari budaya organisasi yang sudah berjalan sejak lama dan menjadi nilai-nilai dan wawasan dunia mereka sendiri.

Para pemimpin jaman sekarang percaya bahwa kualitas utama yang diperlukan untuk mengatasi tuntutan dan kekacauan jaman sekarang ini adalah visi yang besar. Tetapi sejarah membuktikan bahwa kualitas terpenting yang harus dimiliki seorang pemimpin sejati adalah

¹ Eko Digdoyo, "Kajian Isu Toleransi beragama, Budaya dan Tanggung Jawab Sosial Media," *Jurnal Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan* 3, no. 1 (2018): 42-59.

² Gary Yukl, *Kepemimpinan dalam Organisasi* (Jakarta: Indeks, 2009), 5-7.

³ Wirawan, *Kepemimpinan, Teori, Psikologi, Perilaku Organisasi, Aplikasi dan Penelitian* (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 2013), 68.

⁴ Peter G. Northouse, *Kepemimpinan, Teori dan Praktik* (Jakarta: Indeks, 2019), 363.

⁵ Chris Lowney, *Heroic Leadership, Praktik Terbaik Perusahaan berumur 450 tahun yang Mengubah Dunia* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2005), 43.

karakter, seperti pepatah filsuf Yunani Heraclitus yang mengatakan “Karakter seseorang menentukan nasibnya”⁶, karakter dapat dibentuk dengan proses (Style Theory Leadership) dan kecakapan berpikir dapat dilatih menjadi nilai-nilai (value) yang berharga⁷ dan dapat dijadikan kebiasaan yang efektif⁸.

Perintah Agung bagi pemimpin sudah dimulai sejak Perjanjian Lama dan Tuhan Yesus dalam Perjanjian Baru Injil Markus pasal 12 ditantang dengan pertanyaan kontroversial tentang pajak dan kebangkitan dari antara orang mati dan pertanyaan terakhir “perintah mana yang terpenting dari semuanya (ayat 28), Yesus merespon dengan kebenaran yang mendasar dalam Alkitab yang dikenal dengan “Shema” atau Perintah yang Agung “Kasihilah Tuhan Allahmu dengan sepenuh hatimu dan dengan seluruh jiwamu dan dengan seluruh pikiranmu dan dengan seluruh kekuatanmu (ayat 30) kemudian Dia melanjutkan dengan memberikan mereka perintah teragung kedua “Kasihilah sesamamu seperti dirimu sendiri” (ayat 31).

Shema memiliki implikasi yang sangat besar bagi pemimpin karena terdapat model kepemimpinan yang luar biasa yaitu hati (kepemimpinan relasional), jiwa (kepemimpinan rohani), pikiran (kepemimpinan manajerial dan kekuatan (kepemimpinan visioner) sehingga shema menjadi dasar pemimpin biasa menjadi luar biasa⁹.

Ken Blanchard dan Renee Broadwell menjelaskan dalam bukunya “Servant Leadership in Action” bahwa dunia saat ini membutuhkan teladan kepemimpinan yang berbeda dimana melayani lebih dahulu dan memimpin kemudian, ini adalah inti dari ajaran Yesus yang merupakan teladan pemimpin pelayan yang sangat berkomitmen dan efektif.¹⁰ Berbagai masalah muncul (seperti contoh lambatnya keputusan yang diambil, penerapan aksi sosial di lapangan kaum muslim) dikarenakan struktur dan kepemimpinan yang baik tidak didukung atau selaras dengan budaya atau iklim hubungan di dalam komunitas tersebut sehingga pemimpin gereja perlu mengadakan suatu pemetaan gerejanya sendiri dari semua komponen yang ada sehingga melalui pemetaan tersebut pemimpin gereja dapat meneliti, memilah, menganalisa data dan komponen yang penting untuk menentukan atau melakukan arah tujuan, strategi dan kegiatan atau aktivitas yang mengarah pada visi dan misi gereja tersebut¹¹.

Latar Belakang Gereja Lokal GKY BSD

Gereja Kristus Yesus BSD memiliki sejarah yang panjang dimana sebelumnya bernama Gereja Kristus Jemaat Mangga Besar, awal mula ceritanya ada sekelompok jemaat mendirikan pelayanan bahasa Mandarin/Tionghoa (Kuo yu Pu) pada bulan Agustus 1944, setahun kemudian pelayanan ini menjadi gereja otonom pada tanggal 3 Juni 1945 dan mereka

⁶ Myles Munroe, *Kekuatan Karakter di dalam Kepemimpinan, Bagaimana Nilai-Nilai, Moral-Moral, Etika-Etika dan Prinsip-Prinsip Mempengaruhi para Pemimpin* (Jakarta: Light Publishing, 2019), 33.

⁷ Bill Welter and Jean Egmon, *Kecakapan Berpikir bagi Pemimpin* (Jakarta: Indeks, 2009).

⁸ Stephen R. Covey, *The Leader in Me, Kisah Sukses Sekolah dan Pendidik Menggali Potensi Terbesar setiap Anak* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2018).

⁹ Jenni Catron, *Extraordinary Leadership, Menyingkap 4 Rahasia Kepemimpinan yang Berpusat pada Perintah Agung* (Yogyakarta, Indonesia: Penerbit ANDI, 2017), 63-65.

¹⁰ Ken Blanchard and Renee Broadwell, *Servant Leadership in Action, Kepemimpinan yang Memberdayakan dan Mengutamakan Orang Lain* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2019), 3.

¹¹ P. Oktavianus, *Manajemen dan Kepemimpinan Menurut Wahyu Allah* (Malang, Indonesia: Penerbit Gandum Mas, 2001).

memberikan nama Chung Hua Chi Tuh Chiao Hui Kuo Yu Thang yang beralamat di Jalan Mangga Besar I/74 (gang Komandan), Jakarta.

Pada tanggal 11 Mei 1963 nama CHCTCH Kuo Yu Thang Mangga Besar diubah menjadi Gereja Kristus Jemaat Mangga Besar (GKJMB) disahkan dalam dokumen Surat Keputusan Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia Nomor H/II/2918 tertanggal 11 Mei 1963 yang terdaftar di Persekutuan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia (PGI). Melihat pertumbuhan gereja yang begitu pesat dan dengan bertambahnya jumlah jemaat maka dengan mempertimbangkan kepentingan pengembangan pelayanan internal dan eksternal maka Gereja Kristus Jemaat Mangga Besar membentuk Sinode Gereja Kristus Yesus pada tanggal 3 Juni 2002 dan memisahkan diri dari Sinode Gereja Kristus.

Gereja Kristus Yesus (GKY) Bumi Serpong Damai merupakan salah satu dari Jemaat Gereja yang berdomisili di Bumi Serpong Damai (BSD), Tangerang, Propinsi Banten yang diresmikan pada tanggal 7 Februari 1993. Pada tanggal 3 Juni 2002 Pos PI GKJMB BSD menjadi Gereja Wilayah yaitu Gereja Kristus Yesus BSD (GKY BSD) dengan anggota resmi jemaat sebanyak +/- 350 orang dan hingga saat ini tahun 2024 jemaat resmi GKY BSD sudah mencapai diatas 1.300 jiwa Gereja Kristus Yesus BSD memiliki kurang lebih 900 (Sembilan ratus) jemaat anggota tetap, dari kehadiran pada ketiga Kebaktian Minggu (Umum), Sekolah Minggu (Anak-anak), Pemuda dan Remaja maka didapat kurang lebih 1.300 jemaat yang hadir setiap minggunya sehingga dapat dikatakan ada 400 (empat ratus) jemaat yang merupakan simpatisan, pemuda dan remaja yang belum menjadi anggota (dibaptis) dan anak-anak¹².

Gereja Kristus Yesus Bumi Serpong Damai, Tangerang merupakan organisasi nirlaba yang sudah memasuki usia ke-31, gereja ini berada pada suatu daerah yang strategis yaitu kota Tangerang yang berada di pinggiran kota besar Jakarta. Daerah gereja ini merupakan daerah pendukung atau penyangga ibukota Jakarta dan semakin ramai, padat penduduk yang bermukim pada daerah tersebut, gereja ini juga mengalami pertumbuhan yang sangat pesat dengan adanya fenomena pergeseran dimensi budayanya. Berkaitan dengan penjelasan di atas maka penulis memberikan judul "Analisis Dimensi Budaya Hofstede pada Kepemimpinan Gereja Kristus Yesus, Bumi Serpong Damai, Tangerang, Banten".

Mandat Budaya dan Dimensi Budaya Hofstede

Mandat budaya yang diberikan Allah kepada manusia, sebagaimana disebutkan dalam Kitab Kejadian 1:28, merupakan panggilan untuk mengelola dan merawat bumi serta isinya. Ayat tersebut menyatakan bahwa manusia diberi tanggung jawab untuk "taklukkan bumi" dan "berkuasa atas segala" yang ada di dalamnya. Konsep ini mencerminkan dimensi budaya dalam konteks Kristen Protestan, yang mendorong umatnya untuk menjalankan tanggung jawab moral dan sosial mereka sebagai pemelihara bumi. Tanggung jawab ini meliputi perawatan lingkungan, pembangunan masyarakat yang berkelanjutan, dan pemanfaatan sumber daya alam dengan bijak¹³. Kebanyakan pemimpin tidak banyak memikirkan aspek budaya atau iklim dari komunitasnya, padahal justru dalam komunitas

¹² Gandadinata Thamrin, "Analisis Internal SWOT dalam Perencanaan Strategis Gereja Kristus Yesus, Bumi Serpong Damai Ditinjau dari Dimensi Budaya Hofstede" *Jurnal Jurakunman STIE Surya Nusantara*, (2018).

¹³ Adelbert Augustin Sitompul, *Manusia dan Budaya, Teologi Antropologi* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1991), 7.

Gereja, beberapa komponen besar adalah budaya atau iklim yang menjadi identitas komunitas gereja tersebut.

Salah satu penelitian yang dilakukan Verliana dan kawan-kawan pada kepemimpinan Perusahaan Alibaba menunjukkan adanya adaptasi multi budaya atau multi kultural pada anak perusahaan di negara lain walaupun pengaruh budaya Tiongkok masih menonjol¹⁴, begitu juga penelitian lain Perusahaan Richeese Factory yang memiliki 73 cabang menembus pasar global di Cina melakukan adaptasi budaya multi kultural dengan adaptasi rasa dan lokalisasi rasa¹⁵.

Pendekatan dimensi budaya diperkenalkan Geert Hofstede, seorang ahli kebudayaan asal Belanda yang dikenal karena meneliti perbedaan budaya secara empiris dan melakukan risetnya di IBM pada tahun 1960-an, di mana beliau mengumpulkan data dari karyawan IBM di berbagai negara untuk membandingkan nilai-nilai budaya yang berbeda. Hasil penelitiannya kemudian dijabarkan dalam kerangka teori yang dikenal sebagai Dimensi Budaya Hofstede. Menurut Hofstede, budaya adalah sistem nilai yang dianut oleh suatu kelompok, yang diprogramkan secara mental dalam norma-norma sosial dan mempengaruhi perilaku sosial. Artinya, budaya tidak hanya memengaruhi individu secara individual, tetapi juga secara kolektif mengatur cara berpikir dan bertindak dari anggota kelompok tersebut¹⁶.

Enam dimensi budaya Hofstede yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah sebagai berikut¹⁷:

1. Individualisme vs Kolektivisme: Peran individu mengidentifikasi dirinya sebagai bagian dari kelompok atau fokus pada diri sendiri.
2. Penghindaran ketidakpastian: Tingkat kenyamanan dalam menghadapi situasi yang tidak terstruktur atau tidak pasti.
3. Orientasi Waktu: Apakah orientasinya lebih cenderung ke masa lalu, sekarang, atau masa depan.
4. Jarak Kekuasaan: Jarak hierarkis dan kepatuhan terhadap otoritas pemimpin.
5. Masculinity vs. Femininity: Tingkat pentingnya nilai-nilai tradisional maskulinitas (ambisi, persaingan, kesuksesan) dalam budaya dibandingkan dengan nilai-nilai feminin (perawatan, kualitas hidup, kerjasama).
6. Menikmati atau menahan diri (Indulgence versus Restraint) adalah dimensi terakhir yang diungkapkan oleh Hofstede sebagai kelanjutan dari studinya. Terdapat budaya dimana orang-orangnya merasa wajar dan baik untuk dapat menikmati hidup, seperti, melakukan berbagai rekreasi, olahraga, makan, berpakaian yang indah dan menikmati keindahan. Sebaliknya ada budaya yang menekankan pentingnya menahan diri dan menyangkali hal-hal duniawi yang dianggap beresiko menimbulkan ketagihan.

Menurut Robbins dan Mary, dalam konteks organisasi budaya mempunyai fungsi dapat menciptakan identitas yang jelas atau karakteristik tertentu pada organisasi tersebut, mendorong komitmen yang kuat dari anggota terhadap tujuan dan nilai-nilai bersama serta

¹⁴ Elzagi Verliana et al., "Analisis Budaya Organisasi pada Bisnis Internasional Perusahaan Alibaba" *Student Research Journal* 2, no. 1 (2024).

¹⁵ Hasan Golan et al., "Analisa Ekspansi Fast Food Richeese Factory Ke Negara Cina," *Dinamisia: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 6, no. 3 (2022).

¹⁶ Geert Hofstede, *Cultures and Organization* (London: Harper Collin Business, 1991), 10.

¹⁷ Geert Hofstede, *Cultural Consequences, International Differences in Work Related Values* (Beverly Hills, London: Sage Publications, 1980).

terakhir budaya merupakan perekat sosial yang membantu mempersatukan organisasi ini dengan memberikan nilai-nilai, standar-standar yang tepat bagi komunitas. Dengan adanya budaya yang kuat dan positif, organisasi dapat mencapai berbagai tujuan strategisnya dengan lebih efektif. Budaya yang baik juga dapat meningkatkan kepuasan kerja, produktivitas, dan retensi karyawan karena anggota merasa terhubung secara emosional dan nilai dengan organisasi tempat mereka bekerja. Pemahaman tentang fungsi-fungsi ini penting bagi manajer dan pemimpin organisasi dalam membangun dan memelihara budaya yang mendukung visi, misi, dan tujuan organisasi secara keseluruhan¹⁸.

Metode Penelitian

Desain penelitian yang dilakukan pada gereja GKY BSD menggunakan metode kuantitatif (menggunakan kuesioner GLOBE) dimana responden yang berpartisipasi adalah pemimpin gereja, majelis, anggota senior, tata usaha berjumlah 13 orang dengan menggunakan kajian GLOBE¹⁹ yaitu suatu kajian yang digunakan untuk menilai dimensi budaya yang terdiri dari 18 pernyataan dengan skala linkert 1 sampai 7 dengan penjelasan sebagai berikut nilai 1 menunjukkan sangat tidak setuju dan nilai 7 menunjukkan sangat setuju.

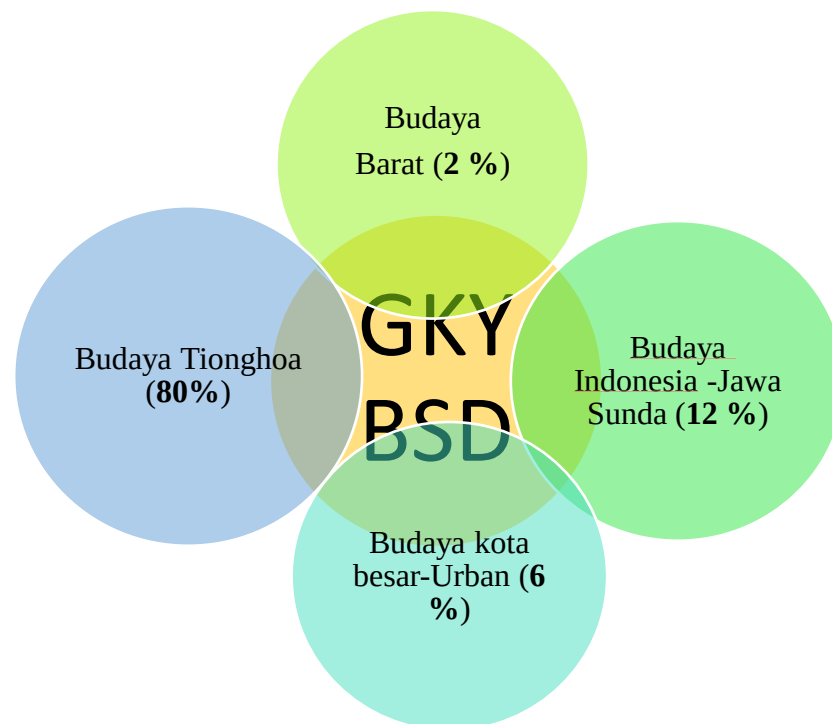
Hasil Fitur dimensi budaya Hofstede pada corak kepemimpinan GKY BSD

Data yang diperoleh dari GKY BSD berdasarkan KTP dan formulir anggota terdapat 80% jemaatnya berlatar belakang Tionghoa dan diperkirakan ada sekitar 1.000 jemaat Tionghoa berbagai daerah menjadi jemaat GKY BSD, sedangkan 20% terdiri keragaman budaya dalam jemaatnya yang datang dari berbagai daerah seperti Sumatra Utara (Suku Batak), Suku Aceh, Suku Jawa, Suku Sunda, Suku Ambon, dari pulau Bangka, Pontianak, Sulawesi, NTT dan lainnya. Suku selain Tionghoa juga mengambil bagian dalam pelayanan termasuk juga dalam kepemimpinan gereja sebagai majelis, ketua Sekolah minggu, Persekutuan remaja dan lainnya.

Corak kepemimpinan Majelis diawal berdirinya mayoritas pengurus Majelis (*dari jemaat*) adalah keturunan etnis Tionghoa dengan Gembala dari etnis non-Tionghoa (Jawa, Batak dan lainnya) hingga 2011. Semenjak tahun 2011 tercatat beragam etnis Indonesia menjadi anggota kepengurusan Majelis sehingga warna Indonesia lebih menonjol pada GKY BSD dibandingkan dengan GKY lainnya.

¹⁸ Stephen P. Robbins and Mary Coulter, *Management* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education Ltd., 2016).

¹⁹ Thom Wolf, "Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies [review]/ House, R. J., Hanges, P. J., & Javidan, M., Eds," *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* 1, no. 1 (2006): 55-71. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jacl/vol1/iss1/6>.



Gb 1. 4 (empat) Pengaruh Budaya Masyarakat atas corporate culture Gereja Kristus Yesus BSD

Hasil kuesioner dengan 13 pemimpin atau pengurus GKY BSD berdasarkan fitur-fitur dimensi Hofstede²⁰ adalah sebagai berikut:

1. Fitur Budaya Tionghoa

Ciri-ciri Fitur Budaya Tionghoa	NILAI
1. Menganggap penting materi (mengumpul, memelihara & mengembangkan).	9
2. Kerja keras, rajin, hemat, tekun, teliti, tabah, setia.	9
3. Berhati-hati.	9
4. Belajar dari kesalahan.	9
5. Sungkan dan tidak menuntut hak.	8
6. Tahu tempatnya dalam Tataan Struktur Komunitasnya.	9
7. Menjaga Nama Baik.	9
8. Mencegah memperlakukan orang lain di depan orang.	9
9. Menghargai Hutang Budi.	9
10. Berani mengambil resiko bila mengenali suatu kesempatan baik.	7
Rata-rata Nilai:	8,7

Keterangan:

Data dari tabel di atas menjelaskan bahwa Fitur-fitur Budaya Tionghoa cukup kental pada Jemaat GKY BSD dengan mendapatkan point rata-rata = **8,7 (delapan koma tujuh)**²¹. Apabila melihat sejarah GKY BSD pada awal berdiri tahun 1992 hingga tahun 2011 yang tidak memiliki kebaktian berbahasa Mandarin, tetapi setelah tahun 2011 pengurus merasa perlu

²⁰ Robby Chandra, *Kepemimpinan dan Budaya Organisasinya* (Seminar STT Cipanas Bogor, 2016).

²¹ Peter G. Northouse, *Kepemimpinan, Teori dan Praktik* (Jakarta: Indeks, 2019), 394-397.

mengadakan kebaktian tersebut walaupun sumber daya manusianya tidak memadai tetapi pengurus mencoba dan ini pun didukung dalam kemajelisan (yang majemuk dari berbagai daerah) maka dimulailah kebaktian berbahasa Mandarin. Ini dapat dilihat dari 4 (empat) Kebaktian Umum didapat 1 (satu) kebaktian yang berbahasa Mandarin yang diterjemahkan dalam bahasa Indonesia.

2. Fitur Budaya Indonesia

Ciri ciri Fitur Budaya Indonesia	NILAI
1. Menghargai orangtua dan yang berwibawa.	9
2. Peduli pada kalangan di dalam dan di luar Komunitas.	9
3. Murah hati.	8
4. Tahu tempatnya dalam tatanan Struktur Komunitasnya.	8
5. Menjaga keselarasan.	9
6. Lebih menekankan relasi dari materi.	9
7. Pemaaf dan Toleransi.	8
8. Suka kerja sama dan mengutamakan kebersamaan dan keluwesan.	9
9. Menjaga perasaan orang lain dan sopan santun.	9
10. Memelihara ritual.	8
Rata-rata Nilai:	8,6

Keterangan:

Dari fitur Budaya Indonesia yang mendapatkan nilai rata-rata **8,6 (delapan koma enam)** memperlihatkan bahwa GKY BSD yang begitu beragam memiliki nilai-nilai dan perilaku etnis Indonesia yang kental dan ini memang sejalan dengan fitur budaya Tionghoa (*ada kesamaan antara kedua fitur budayanya*) sehingga dapat dikatakan GKY BSD memang gereja etnis Tionghoa yang Bhineka Tunggal Ika.

3. Fitur Budaya Kota Besar (Urban Culture).

Ciri ciri Fitur Budaya Kota Besar – Urban	NILAI
1. Individualis.	5
2. Pragmatis.	6
3. Hasil nyata dari semua proses dikejar.	5
4. Mobilitas tinggi dianggap wajar.	5
5. Dualitas antara Sekuler dan Sacred.	5
6. Lebih mementingkan tersedianya pilihan-pilihan.	5
7. Egalitarian.	5
8. Pluralis.	6
9. Fungsional.	6
10. Super Competitive.	5
Rata-rata Nilai:	5,3

Keterangan:

Walaupun ada **6%** (enam) jemaat yang mempunyai fitur budaya Urban tetapi dapat dikatakan secara keseluruhan budaya Urban ini tidak dominan pada GKY BSD dengan angka yang didapatkan **5,3 (lima koma tiga)**, ini memperlihatkan bahwa fitur budaya Urban muncul

dalam perilaku dan nilai-nilainya tetapi tidak berpengaruh secara dominan pada keseluruhan nilai dan perilakunya.

4. Fitur Budaya Barat

Ciri ciri Fitur Budaya Barat	NILAI
1. Mementingkan Kerapihan Proses Kerja.	3
2. Mementingkan Kejelasan Aturan.	4
3. Kejelasan Wewenang dan Hak.	4
4. Kejelasan Tanggung Jawab dan Sasaran.	4
5. Kejelasan Tahap Kerja.	4
6. Kejelasan Imbalan dan Ganjaran.	4
7. Kejelasan Indikator Keberhasilan.	5
8. Mengejar Keunggulan dan Menang dalam Persaingan.	3
9. Rasional.	5
10. Memperhitungkan Untung dan Rugi.	5
Rata-rata Nilai:	4,1

Keterangan:

Angka rata-rata **4,1 (empat koma satu)** menunjukkan bahwa fitur budaya Barat tidak terlalu berperan dalam komunitas GKY BSD walaupun beberapa jemaat memiliki pola fitur budaya tersebut bahkan ada beberapa jemaat yang mengusulkan dan menanyakan adanya kebaktian berbahasa Inggris (English Service) dikarenakan beberapa orang asing berkebaktian di GKY BSD.

Analisa kajian GLOBE dengan dimensi budaya Hofstede

Hasil penelitian lanjutan ini menunjukkan beberapa perbedaan yang signifikan pada dimensi 1, 2, 4 dan 5 yang menunjukkan dimensi budaya Indonesia menunjukkan karakternya bersama dengan dimensi budaya Tionghoa, berikut penjelasannya sebagai berikut:

1. Dimensi 1: Masalah Kesetaraan Kuasa.

GKY BSD memiliki kesetaraan kuasa yang melebihi rata-rata (angka 8) dimana Gembala menjadi sosok yang berwibawa, ini pola kepemimpinan fitur budaya Tionghoa yang patuh dan hormat pada yang tua atau pimpinan, sementara pimpinan lainnya termasuk majelis dan pengurus pun mengikuti pola pimpinan yang menunjukkan unsur kerja kelompoknya juga terlihat dalam program-programnya dan ini fitur budaya Indonesianya.

2. Dimensi 2: Individual atau Kolektif.

Melihat dari corak kepemimpinan Gembala sekarang ini dan sistem kerja Majelis dengan Hamba Tuhan maka dapat dikatakan bahwa GKY BSD lebih menekankan kebersamaan, menjaga perasaan orang dengan menempatkan diri pada posisinya sehingga nilai kolektifnya pada angka 7 dan ini menunjukkan budaya Tionghoa dan budaya Indonesia menjadi hal yang utama dalam pengambilan keputusan.

3. Dimensi 3: Masalah Jangka Panjang atau Jangka Pendek.

GKY BSD menunjukkan ciri-ciri program Jangka Pendek dimana program kerja yang dibuat selama setahun dan tidak banyak merencanakan program jangka panjang

5 tahun termasuk pembangunan gedung Gereja BSD tetapi lebih pada Pembangunan Gedung gereja cabang Alam sutera.

4. Dimensi 4: Masalah Maskulin atau Feminin.

Gaya kepemimpinan Majelis dan Hamba Tuhan dapat dikatakan Feminin yang lebih mengarah pada fitur Budaya Tionghoa dan Indonesia yang pemaaf, peduli, pluralis dan murah hati. Hal ini terlihat banyak dalam program-program yang dijalankan gaya feminin (angka 8) menjadi Keputusan gembala dan majelis.

5. Dimensi 5: Penghindaran Ketidakpastian.

Menyambung poin di atas maka penghindaran ketidakpastian mendapat angka yang cukup tinggi yaitu angka 8 sama dengan gaya kepemimpinan feminin dalam pengambilan keputusan program yang mementingkan keluwesan dan toleransi antara jemaat dan masyarakat sekitarnya.

6. Dimensi 6: Menikmati atau Menahan Diri.

Selanjutnya untuk poin ini maka GKY BSD menempatkan angka 5 untuk menikmati kenyamanan dibandingkan kerja keras, hemat atau menahan ini, terlihat beberapa rencana atau pengambilan keputusan seringkali tertunda dan kesulitan untuk pertemuan rapat karena banyak pengurus yang bekerja di Jakarta dan ini menyulitkan untuk rapat pada hari kerja.

Kesimpulan

Dari hasil penelitian di atas maka dapat disimpulkan beberapa hal sebagai berikut: gereja GKY BSD memiliki suatu sistem kepemimpinan yang mapan, terstruktur, kuat, terorganisasi baik dalam tingkat sinodenya, tetapi memiliki desentralisasi yang unik pada masing-masing wilayahnya. Hasil kajian GLOBE menunjukkan bahwa secara mayoritas masih pada fitur budaya Tionghoa yang kental tetapi ada pergeseran nilai pada fitur dimensi budaya Indonesia menunjukkan peningkatan dari penelitian sebelumnya.

Gaya kepemimpinan budaya Tionghoa yang kuat, kekuatan keuangan yang terkontrol, memiliki corak kepemimpinan kesetaraan jarak yang tidak terlalu tinggi dan melakukan program kerja secara kolektif dan feminin lebih menghindari ketidakpastian dengan menikmati keluwesan, peduli, pemaaf, murah hati, pluralis untuk jangka pendek dan ini menunjukkan adanya keseimbangan walaupun antara fitur budaya Tionghoa dengan fitur budaya Indonesia sehingga dapat disimpulkan bahwa GKY BSD telah menunjukkan pertumbuhan jemaatnya dengan turut mengembangkan multi kultural dan keragaman budaya Indonesia.

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Women in Ministry: Re-Reading 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 in the 21st Century Context

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Received: 16/07/2024

Accepted: 09/09/2024

Published: 30/09/2024

Abstract

First Corinthians 14:33-35 reveals one of the many controversies about the roles of women in ministry in the church today. Many scholars have given diverse interpretations of the verses. The verses have led many people including many Christian denominations to have some positions on women in ministry. The trust of this article is to explore the correct interpretation of the verses based on some historical and biblical perspectives. The work adopted the historical and biblical exegesis method. Feminism theory was also considered in the work. The work concluded that 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 should not be interpreted literally. It must be interpreted within its context. It also concluded that women have their roles to play in the world and the propagation of the gospel of Christ regardless of attempts by men to relegate them to the background.

Keywords: *Black womanism, women in 1 Corinthians 14: 33-35, women speaking in churches, controversies in the church*

Introduction

First Corinthians 14:33-35 has raised more controversy in the church today. What did Paul mean when he wrote these to the Corinthians? Are they binding on today's Christians? How should these verses be interpreted? These are the thrust of this paper. The article went into the historical and biblical perspectives of women and the implications of this. It also viewed the controversy from many points of view, and then came out with conclusions on the issue. Some would explain this away as a special command to the unruly women at Corinth to straighten up, rather than a general command to all women everywhere. But if we treat one scripture this way, what is to stop us from treating every scripture this way? Surely the New Testament is written for the whole church.

The subject of the passage is: '*The women in the churches* (plural)'. This means 'all women.' Moreover, the command is based on 'the law' which means it applies to all, rather than just to those in a particular culture or time.

Let us consider what this passage is saying. The word for 'silent' does not mean 'quiet'. Thus, it is not saying that women should have a quiet (meek) spirit. The word translated 'silent' means no word can be spoken! It is saying *women must be* (completely) *silent in church*. This does not just disqualify them from teaching but from testifying, praying, prophesying, and moving in the gifts of the Spirit-the latter being the context of these verses (1 Corinthians 12:1).

The first problem with this passage is that it contradicts Paul's other teaching in this book. For he says women may pray and prophesy in church (1 Corinthians 11:3-5). In 1 Corinthians 12, especially in verses 13-27, he teaches that all members of the church (men and women), are members of the body and thus have a function in the body working in co-ordination with each other, and so we can all be used in the gifts and ministries of the Spirit.

So, he says 'if *all* (men and women) prophesy' (1 Corinthians 14:24)

'When you come together, *everyone* (men and women) of you has a psalm, has a doctrine, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation' (verse 26).

'You may *all* prophesy one by one' (verse 31).

So, why would he say three verses later that all women must be silent in church? Is he being double-minded? So, the first problem is that in the middle of encouraging everyone to move out in ministry, he is telling all women to be silent!

This also contradicts the spirit of the New Testament with Jesus treating women with honour, with the churches set free from all Jewish traditions (Acts 15), with full equality in the church (Galatians 3:28) and with the Spirit poured upon all flesh (male and female) to give power for ministry (Acts 1:8, 2:4,16-18)

A second problem is the discouragement upon women from even learning:

'And *if they want to learn*.' The tone of this is condescending to women, that not only should they not speak, but it is also optional for them to learn the Word (it is even mildly frowned upon as if it were not really their place.) This is clearly in contradiction to the New Testament teaching for women and contrasts with what Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:11: 'Let a woman learn.' Here he encourages women to study the Word. Here he speaks against those who would discourage them.

Women in Ministry: 1 Corinthians 14:34–35

34 αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν· οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν, ἀλλὰ ὑποτασσέσθωσαν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει.

35 εἰδέτι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν, ἐνοῖκω τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν· αἰσχρὸν γάρ ἐστιν γυναικὶ λαλεῖν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ.

34 Women should be silent during the church meetings. It is not proper for them to speak. They should be submissive, just as the law says. **35** If they have any questions, they should ask their husbands at home, for it is improper for women to speak in church meetings (NLT).

First Corinthians 14:34–35 is one of the two texts from the New Testament often used as a major argument against preaching, teaching, and leadership ministries for women in the church. An adequate, biblical explanation must be offered for this apparent prohibition against women in ministry.

It should be recalled that Paul has already indicated in this letter—1 Corinthians—that women did participate in prayer and prophecy with the authority in the church (1 Corinthians 11:5, 10; 14:3–5). This fact alone shows that 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 cannot be a general, absolute, and timeless prohibition on women speaking in church. It was common at one time to “dismiss” the evidence of 1 Corinthians 11:5, 10 according to Metzger¹ and a few would still argue this position. Baker² suggested that 1 Corinthians 11:2–16 did not refer to a meeting

¹ Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart, Germany: Freiburger Graphische, 2005).

² Kenneth Baker, ed., *The NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995).

of the church but only to a private non-church gathering. The whole context of 1 Corinthians 11:2–14:40, the argument of 1 Corinthians 11:16, and the parallel between 1 Corinthians 11:2 and 11:17 make such an idea most untenable. Some have even suggested that 1 Corinthians 11:5 was only hypothetical, but such an approach is clearly an argument of desperation.

The silence enjoined in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 must be a specific, limited silence. Numerous suggestions have been offered, but only the major alternatives can be reviewed here (some scholars, with slight evidence, have also suggested either that 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 was not written by Paul but was inserted by a copyist or that it is a question from Paul's opponents in Corinth which Paul denounces in 1 Corinthians 14:36. Protus (1995) opined that the speaking prohibited here is mere babbling. There is, however, nothing specific in the context to support this meaning of "speak," and such nonsense would certainly have been prohibited to all persons in the worship Paul described. Another view suggests that speaking prohibited is speaking in tongues (*glossolalia*) since that is frequently mentioned in the preceding context (1 Corinthians 14). However, *glossolalia* is always referred to as "tongues" or "speaking in tongues" and never simply as speaking (Metzger, 2005).

The most popular view today among those who oppose women speaking with authority in the church is to identify the speaking prohibited with the judgment of the prophets mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14:29. Greenbury³ argued that women may prophesy (1 Corinthians 11:5) but may not judge or evaluate prophecy. The evaluation of prophecy is seen as the truly authoritative level of speech in the church from which women are to be excluded. This view has two major difficulties. First, the word "speak" in 1 Corinthians 14:34 has no implication within the word itself or in its immediate context (14:34–35). Akintunde⁴ supported identifying it with the concept of prophetic evaluation. Second, the idea of two levels of speech in the church — prophecy and the judgment of prophecy — with the understanding that one is higher than the other and is for men only has no clear or implied support elsewhere in Pauline writings. Paul's own definition and defense of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:1–25) implies directly that prophecy itself is an authoritative speech of the highest level in the church.⁵

The view that seems best is to understand the speaking prohibited here to women to refer only to disruptive questions that wives (usually uneducated in the culture of Paul's time) were asking their husbands. This corresponds precisely with the resolution Paul offers (1 Corinthians 14:35): "if they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home... (NIV)." Such disruptive questioning was also considered a disgrace in Paul's day in which it was widely believed that it was morally indiscreet for any wife to say anything on any subject in public. This view of disruptive questioning also fits well the specific context (1 Corinthians 14:26–40) in which Paul is concerned about appropriateness and order, which permits genuine edification (note that 1 Corinthians 14:26 expects everyone to participate). Thus, there are three injunctions to silence (1 Corinthians 14:2, 30, 34), although many Bible translations use "silent" only in 1 Corinthians 14:34.

³ James Greenbury, "1 Corinthians 14:34–35: Evaluation of Prophecy Revisited," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51, no. 4 (December 2008): 721–31. <https://www.bible-researcher.com/greenbury.pdf>

⁴ D. O. Akintunde, *The Lukean Narratives about Women* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Nigeria Publication Bureau, 2005).

⁵ Albert Hogeterp, "Prophecy and the Prophetic as Aspects of Paul's Theology," *Stellenbosch Theological Journal* 4, no. 2 (2018): 169–196. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17570/stj.2018.v4n2.a09>

Black Feminism or Black Womanism

The limitation of mainstream feminism led to the birth of black feminism. The black womanism argued that feminism's central focus should be human emancipation and the "construction of more egalitarian societies – one in which both women and men are freed, from sexist and other forms of oppression."⁶ The black feminists insist that racial and sexual oppression were the fundamental issues in black women's oppression. Walker⁷ (one of the leading black feminists and the proponents of womanism) insisted that the black woman must begin to speak up for herself. Christian,⁸ advocating Walker's position, observed that "if black women do not tell the world who they are other people will say it badly for them when we speak ... we validate our experiences. I am a black woman, which means that when I read, I have a particular stance."

The development of the culture of black women's assertiveness encouraged them to speak out on issues that endangered their existence. Black feminist writers reflect this consciousness in literary works that emerged to correct early negative portrayals of black people. The slave culture of silence and suffering, without demand for redress, finally gave way to that of a conscious demand for human rights and better treatment. The black woman discovered that it was important for her to speak out if her desire for freedom and empowerment was to be realized. Brown⁹ captured this transformation when she quoted Clark,¹⁰

I used to feel that women couldn't speak up, because when district meetings were being held at my home, I didn't feel as if I could tell them what I had in mind but later, I found out that women had a lot to say, and what they had to say was worthwhile. So, we started talking and have been talking quite a lot since that time.

The discourse of Black Feminism is dominated by the demand for change in the socio-political and economic order of things. This took a new turn when Walker¹¹ drew attention to the peculiar realities of the black woman in America. The necessity of defining the black woman's reality led to the birth of the movement which Walker called "womanism."

As an ideology, womanism is the black woman's intellectual framework that articulates her standpoint on self, community, and society. It is committed to forging positive self-definition, self-relevance, self-reliance self-discovery, and self-independence that can fight racial and sexist oppression. Stewart, one of the early black feminists, urged black women to be "bold and enterprising, fearless and undaunted" if they were to have any rich heritage of progress, independence, and positive self-affirmation.¹²

⁶ Y.O. Akorede, *Feminism and the Intra-Gender Conflict Theory* (Cotonou, Benin: Lyette Book, 2011), 43.

⁷ Alice Walker, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovick, 1970).

⁸ Barbara Christian, *Black Feminist Criticism: Perspectives on Black Women Writer* (New York: Pergamon, 1989), 12.

⁹ Cynthia S. Brown, *Ready from Within: Septima Clark and the Civil Rights Movement* (Navarro, TX: Wild Tree, 1986).

¹⁰ Alice S. Clark, *Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Kelly, 1968), 82.

¹¹ Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovic, 1984).

¹² Richardson, as quoted by Y. O. Akorede, *Feminism and the Intra-Gender Conflict Theory*, (Cotonou: Lyette Book. 2011).

Walker¹³ described womanism as a universalist ideology that is “committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female.” Womanism emphasizes the centrality of the family, motherhood, and mutual coexistence. Its central concern, however, is like that of other women-centered movements. Nevertheless, it equally agitates for the actualization of the black woman’s desire for political, social, and economic relevance in the United States of America.

Historical and Biblical Perspectives

In the Bible, it was recorded that “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27, NIV). However, in Genesis chapter 2, there is a specific purpose for creating a woman – to be “a helper suitable for [man]” (verse 18, NIV). Since then, women have been a helper, and not a servant or subordinate, of man. Both are equal before God. Despite their obvious physical differences, there are no spiritual differences between them. However, as time went on, as it will be proved through ancient history below, women were relegated to an inferior position, even to the point of viewing them as ordinary properties of men.

Nevertheless, God made use of many women in the history of Israel to demonstrate that they are also important. Such women were: (1) Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron (Exodus 15:20-21) who was a prophetess, musician, and a national leader (Numbers 12), and her leadership skills were a special gift to the people of Israel (Micah 6:4); (2) Deborah was a prophetess of God and the only female judge of Israel (Judges 4:1-5) who led the army of Israel to war with a resounding victory; (3) Huldah was a great prophetess who gave God’s word to Josiah at the beginning of a religious revival in Israel (2 Chronicles 34:22-28), and who God chose to speak when prophets like Jeremiah and Zephaniah were also doing God’s work; (4) Esther, a Hebrew woman who married the Persian king, Xerxes, saved her people from a terrible conspiracy (see the Book of Esther); (5) Mary, the mother of Jesus was the woman in the Bible who fulfils God’s ancient promise to Eve that she would one day be the great victor over Satan, the great enemy of humankind.

All the above women, except Mary, were Old Testament women. In the New Testament, there were also many women who had public ministries for God. This included Philip’s daughters (Acts 21:9), Phoebe (Romans 16:1), Priscilla (Romans 16:3), Junia (Romans 16:7), Tryphena and Tryphosa (Romans 16:12), Persis (Romans 16:12), and Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2). All these women, and many more today, mark the beginning of the fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy of a day that women, as well as men, would be the instruments of the Holy Spirit’s work (Joel 2:28-29). According to an online report,

The foregoing overview of women in the Bible has shown the New Testament is replete with affirmations of the personhood of women and of their valuable contributions to the work of the church. Women and men are equally members of the priesthood of believers by faith in Jesus Christ. They are both called to “declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1Peter2:9).¹⁴

The ancient history, especially the Greco-Roman history, reveals how women were relegated to the background. According to an Internet source. The secular Roman/Grecian

¹³ Walker, *In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens*.

¹⁴ “Women in The Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice Introduction and Part I ‘Women_in_Church3’”, accessed May 1, 2008.
http://www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/CTCR/Women_in_Church3.pdf.

culture of the day was strongly influenced by the pagan philosophers, primarily Socrates (470-399 B.C.), Plato (427-347 B.C.), and Aristotle (384-322 B.C.). Socrates taught, for example, that in all regard women were "the weaker sex," and that being a woman was a punishment, since women were halfway between being animal and human. In the Greek culture of that time, the men loved to get together and discuss philosophy, or go to sporting events, while the women stayed behind, never being allowed to venture out of the house extremely far. Social, cultural, and educational opportunities for women were limited.

Aristotle furthered the notion of sexual inequality with comments such as these: "The courage of a man is shown in commanding, of a woman in obeying." "The difference between husband and wife is like that of a man's soul and his body, as the soul is meant to command the arms and legs." Later, the philosopher Zeno (335-265 B.C.) objected to how men used women so freely for recreational purposes. He was not concerned with the plight of women, but rather that men were in this way distracted from the more pure and preferred pursuit of philosophy! Zeno's followers became known as the Stoics, from the stoa pokily (or painted colonnade) in the marketplace in Athens, where Zeno chose to teach. The Stoics became champions of celibacy and restraint. Women were considered a distraction and a temptation to men.¹⁵

Christianity was born and bred in this culture of discrimination against women. The culture influenced the thoughts of many church fathers and theologians that made many people believe not only this discrimination but also the literal translation of some parts of the Bible.

In the early twentieth century, the role of women in the society changed dramatically because of the effects of the two World Wars. When men went to these wars, women took the positions of men in every facet of life. So, when the men came back, it was difficult for them to push the women back to their traditional place. Women also discovered themselves as people that can do what only men as been doing before.

The Historical Implication

The implication of these historical and biblical perspectives is that men have tried, and are still trying, to relegate women to the background. One such trial is the literal interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:33-36. Nevertheless, many women have discovered their original God-given abilities, and they are exercising these abilities today.

The controversial passage (1 Corinthians 14:33-36) cannot be removed from the Bible. It must be interpreted and applied appropriately. The problem has to do with the understanding of what Paul meant to some people. What does "not to speak" entail? Does it mean that women are to remain silent, not singing, not allowed to cough, or comfort or discipline their children? Does it mean during only "formal church services" but not during Bible studies and any other forums of the church? Why should women be subjected to silence? How do women vocalizing in the church usurp authority?

Having referred to 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, a Bible commentator is of the opinion that, "the subject of this section is propriety in public worship, not male-female relations in general. Paul was concerned, however, that the proper relationship between husbands and wives be reflected in public worship ... he desires that all be done to the glory of God (10:31)." [OBJ]

¹⁵ "Should A Woman Be Allowed to Speak or Participate in Services - Part 1" (accessed May 1, 2008). <http://www.biblestudy.org/basicart/should-women-speak-or-participate-in-church-services-1.html>

Taking this into consideration, there are many positions among Bible scholars. Amongst these opinions are:

- i. God has ordained an order that is a basis for administration and authority, and therefore, women must be in submission to their husbands both at home and in the church regardless of their culture.
- ii. Since it was the social order that it was disgraceful for women to speak in the public, Paul's concern is that the church would be strengthened if women respect that order; and
- iii. The point of discussion was disruption of worship by women who became involved in noisy discussions pertaining to speaking in tongue and prophecy.

In line with point (iii) above, it is believed that it was not an order to all the men not to allow any woman to speak in church, but specifically to husbands to guide and teach their own wives so that they cause confusion and disturbance in a meeting. However, what about the unmarried women? Who will guide and teach them? This raises another controversy that the word translated "women" in the passage may not refer to women in general, but to wives only. Interestingly, the same Greek word was translated "woman" and "wife" in most English translations. It was, therefore, the opinion of Lowery¹⁶ that,

Paul...wanted silence on the parts of married women whose husbands were present in the assembly, but he permitted the participation of other women when properly adorned (1 Cor. 11:2-16). Such silence would express their subordinate (not inferior) relationship to their husbands. This contrasts with a disturbance caused by their talking to their husbands during the service.

In his reactions to this controversy, Warfield¹⁷ concluded

(1) That the prohibition of speaking in the church to women is precise, absolute, and all-inclusive. They are to keep silent in the churches — and that means in all the public meetings for worship; they are not even to ask questions; (2) that this prohibition is given especial point precisely for the two matters of teaching and ruling covering specifically the functions of preaching and ruling elders; (3) that the grounds on which the prohibition is put are universal and turn on the difference in sex, and particularly on the relative places given to the sexes in creation and in the fundamental history of the race (the fall).

Another argument is that Paul could not be contradicting himself with this passage in relation to what he has said in other places (see 1 Corinthians 11:4-5; 14:26; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11; Titus 2:3-5), and with his action of allowing women to be his fellow workers in spreading the gospel (compare Acts 18:3; Romans 16:1-16; Philippians 4:2-3). Paul gave some qualifications for electing deaconesses in 1 Timothy 3:11. What would have been their roles if they were not to speak in the church?

Conclusion

Women are created in the image of God as helpmate for men. They have their roles to play in the world and in the propagation of the gospel of Christ. Regardless of attempts by

¹⁶ David K. Lowery, *1 Corinthians: In the Bible Knowledge Commentary*, edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983).

¹⁷ Benjamin B. Warfield, *Paul on Women Speaking in Church* (2008), <http://www.bible-researcher.com/warfield1.html>

men to relegate them to the background, women are equal spiritually to men, and they can perform any role in the church and in any other place. Therefore, 1 Corinthians 14:33-35 should not be interpreted literally. It must be interpreted within its context. However, women should remember that they are to be in submission to their husbands regardless of the position they find themselves in.

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The Church in The Public Space: Lessons from The Exodus Church in Jürgen Moltmann's Theology of Hope

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Received: 12/08/2024

Accepted: 01/10/2024

Published: 30/09/2024

Abstract

The ecclesial community's call to duty and ability to carry out its mission is centered on how relevant it must become to the existential realities of those living in the public sphere. Jürgen Moltmann makes what can only be considered as a concise statement when he states that, to make Christianity accessible to the masses, theology must openly uphold the universal concerns of God's coming Kingdom. The church, following its own faith principles, must demonstrate "general concern in the light of hope in Christ for the kingdom of God" by becoming "political in the name of the poor and the marginalized in a given society, by thinking critically about the religious and moral values of the societies in which it exists." Christian theology continues to be the mouthpiece of the church. This article's goal is to discuss Jürgen Moltmann's straightforward explanation of the church's public relevance in helping people remember why it exists in all forms of human sociality. This article's reflections aim to highlight the fact that the Christian church can only be seen to be fulfilling its mission when it is perceived as the voice of the voiceless, bringing God's fullness to human flourishing, and providing true meaning to human tranquillity in a difficult and uncertain world.

Keywords: Christianity, civil society, public church, public theology, modern society, kingdom of God.

Introduction

Exodus church is an analysis by Jürgen Moltmann which is based on the entreaty by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Hebrews 13:13-14) for Christian faithful who are identified as having no continuing city in the present world to seek one to come. Jürgen Moltmann was a German Reformed theologian, a Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Tübingen, Germany. A foremost theologian who became popular through his work of the Theology of Hope from which the sub-title, the "Exodus Church" became the focus of our reflection. Moltmann passed on at age 98, on June 3rd, 2024. His legacy and theology cannot be summarized into one sentence as also has been reiterated by Janna Gonwa of the Martin Marty Center of the University of Chicago Divinity School, USA. We could state for the purposes of this article that, his theological treatises critically emphasized a Christocentric theological reflection, bringing into focus the humanity of God through Jesus of Nazareth. The calling of Christians who live on the eternal hope of Jesus the Christ and who are born into the community of the life of the people, must always recognize the mission of Christian theology; to critical identify with the plight of the ordinary people and nature crying

for redemption and hope in the dying world of nature. Moltmann was forever convinced that, Jesus Christ presented the human face of God to the world, for the redemption and reversal of human alienation because of sin and disobedience.

In this probe, Moltmann seeks to delineate the import of the eschatological theme vis-à-vis the social character of Christianity. Moltmann therefore adapts the euphemism to draw attention to the reality of Christianity as the pilgrim people of God. From the Old Testament narrative, it can be inferred that Israel's exodus had ramifications for Egypt's productive workforce and social outlook. Considering that Biblical Israel's exodus from Egypt had considerable influence on the social structure of the latter, this nomenclature of an 'Exodus church' is relevant for such enquiry within the social ethics of 'modern society'. The critical enquiry to be undertaken in this part of the research is the question of the 'publicness' of theology or the question of what 'public' the Christian Church must engage or is invited to engage society with the future of God for all humanity. In other critical discourses, Moltmann had insisted that theology for God's sake is always kingdom-of-God theology and as "theology of God's kingdom, it has to be public, critical and prophetic complaint to God-public, critical and prophetic hope in God."¹ The point is further reiterated that, the public character of theology must be constitutive of the hope of the people in the expectation of the kingdom of God. For theology to fulfil that dream, it must have its institutional liberty, and a place in the open house of the wider community, scholarship and the sciences that is the place of the public, civil society and the wider culture of the people. The demand on the church and for that matter Christian theology is a long-term commitment to promotion and support of economic justice, human rights, social justice, compassionate love and charity.

The problem is that the church must define its relevance in a modern society and public life. The church does not exist on her own; it exists in the reality of the calling of God to participate in the mission to save the world of downs lidding morality, hopelessness and misery. This world of the church, as Moltmann would assert, is governed by the sphere of public life, which is governed by consumption and commerce, the realm in which the relations between man and man is determined by the things of business world and by the businesslike approach. The modern world of the church and society, overly controlled by the advancing science and technological exchanges, presents a challenge to the church. Both the modern world and the church enjoy the fruits of these scientific and technological advancement and finds it difficult to deal with the many infractions and negativities to both life and culture.² The Christian church was trimmed to focus on the spiritual upliftment of the faith community and to the relegation of the socio-cultural aspirations of the people in the political economy solely to the responsibility of the political class.

Modern industrial society's information superhighway, technological-artificial intelligence and tailored high-definition cinematic experiences, exert great influence on the political economy, society and the family life of people beyond measure. There is the possibility of society navigating towards the movie center of the modern civilization of science and technology, characteristically considering itself to be neutral to religion and the significance of faith to the value of life and the promotion of the quality of life. This has the

¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society: The Public Relevance of Theology* (England: SCM Press, 1999), 5-23.

² Sebastian, Kim C. H, *Theology in the Public Sphere: Public Theology as a Catalyst for Open Debate* (London: SCM Press, 2011), 57-62.

propensity to, on the part of modern industrial civilization, withdraw itself from religious traditions and orders and the various institutions created therefrom. Additionally, it seeks to absolve Christianity of the responsibility of serving as society's moral compass and remove it from its place at the core of integration.

Jurgen Moltmann poses the question; "What are the social roles in which this modern society places faith, the congregation, the Church and finally Christianity?"³ Humans are social beings as well as religious beings, linked to the creator and the created order that allows for human flourishing. Religion and the church cannot be removed or wished away from their true essence of living together in the created order of life, at least not in any given human reality. History favors the Christian religion's significance in the public space of society. From Emperor Constantine right into the 19th century, as noted by Moltmann, besides its several challenges, the Christian Church had occupied a definite position in the public social life of the people.

"The place and function of the Church were firmly established. Everyone knew what was to be expected of."⁴ The church became the protector and the preserver of the dignity of human persons, for the common good of the people, it wanted it a supreme duty on the part of the public to venerate the Divine order of life for the ultimate end of life for all-the highest goal of society is the true veneration of God. The church is defined as an important player and contributor to all issues bordering on the public of the people. The Christian Church defined and informed by her Christological principles and convictions of faith that characterizes contemporary public life. According to Kim Sebastian⁵, there should be a reciprocal critique between the public and the Church. This emphasizes that the objective shouldn't be to just advocate for one way of life over another, but rather to carefully and critically examine the many options. The Christian Church regains her reputation as a public church that engages in public life and social activities. She also continues to critically examine people's real-life issues that confront them on daily basis, driven by her religious beliefs, promotes the intellectual, spiritual, and cultural life of the larger community.

This article seeks to delve into the relevance of the Christian Church in the public space as Jürgen Moltmann's work on the "Exodus Church" in his masterpiece; the *Theology of Hope*, published in 1967 has been our focus.⁶ The fact that Christian principles and their pervasive impacts on the justice of the people's economic and sociocultural lives are the focus of our reflection in this essay is also important to mention.

The article has the African (Ghana specific) experience of religion as the penetrating evidence of hope and aspirations of life. In Ghana, from the 2020 population census and Housing survey, 71% of the 32 million population are Christians. The problem however is that the church in Ghana, has in many instances limited itself to the preoccupation of church-life within the walls of the church, functioning in many instances as a confessional church rather than a church in exodus, whose eschatological expectation has implications for the social order. It is our hypothesis that in the first place, the overwhelming numbers of Christians in

³ Moltmann, *God for A Secular Society: The Public Relevance of Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1999).

⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row Publishers, 1967), 306.

⁵ Kim, Sebastian and Katie Day, (eds), *A Companion to Public Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 306-308.

Ghana implies that the Christian religion is a penetrating religion and the lifeworld of the people, in terms of cultural aspirations, socio-economic life and the political choices of the populace. A second implication of our hypothesis is that the socio-religious milieu in Ghana places the Christian Church in a position of responsibility towards contributing to the quality of life of the people. Thus, it is critical for Christian principles and faith practice to engage with all manner of public discourses and dialogue to influence the quality of life of the Ghanaian people.

Christianity in The Modern and Civil Society Public

Christianity

Christianity, per the Reformed tradition of Luther inter alia, is represented via 'church' and 'congregation', and by Christians at their worldly callings and in their social roles. This definition is followed by Moltmann.⁷ The observation by Moltmann in describing what he asserts as defining Christianity, is in reference to their calling in the Church. Christianity then could be defined from both its institutional characteristics and the communal nature of their organization. Communal nature is defined and informed by their congregation around the world and sacrament in the fellowship of worship and service. Christianity as an institution must also recognize their worldly calling in life obedience to their principles of faith and order of life in the social realities of the people. Moltmann decries the notion of worldly callings of Christians waning in modern evangelical church context as sociologically explicable, yet theologically unintelligible.⁸ The Christian life realities must clearly define its significance in respect of the extent of relationship and impact it must bring to bear on the particular realities of the people and also on the changing expectations on life.

Modern Society

As a consequence of modern industrial systems, modern society is the sphere of public life governed by the conduct of business, production, consumption and commerce. Such society has the characteristic of considering itself emancipated from religious and traditional influences.⁹ In principle, it emancipates itself from all presuppositions regarding the orders of human life as laid down by historic tradition and finds its content solely in the constant and consistent nature of man's needs. The religious center which in pre-modern times integrated people religiously to form a society resulted in such images of the church as the crown, the healing center and the inner principle of society.

Unlike, Western societies, many African societies still maintain their religious center in governance and daily life. Classical view of society, however considered a religiously neutral government which restricted itself to the improvement of peace and worldly wellbeing as lunacy. The nature and power of modern western society however was attained precisely through liberation from the religious center. Subsequently cries of the loss of a center in a disintegrating society are seen in modern society as expressions of a longing for a pre-modern religious society.¹⁰ For Africans however, government must necessarily facilitate the

⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 304.

⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 305.

⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 305.

¹⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 307.

religious center because religion constitutes an integral aspect of African life. African societies actively contend liberation of the religious center to prevent moral ineptitude and disintegration of societal mores. It could be argued that Africans are averse to witnessing their values languishing in the abyss of modernity and its post-modern offspring.

Civil Society

Civil Society is also portrayed by Moltmann as the immense power that entangles man and makes him to serve it as the conduit of all that he may accomplish¹¹. Alluding to Hegel's approach of the age of universal conformity, mediocrity and mass organization, Moltmann indicates that an individual, whose aim is their own self-interest, becomes the subject or citizen in civil society.¹² The idea of the freedom of all men therefore coincides with the subjection of the individual to the society. This is attributed as a consequence of the abstract, non-historic character of the industrial revolution, where all other life relationships are relieved of social necessity and where man counted because he is man and not because he is Catholic or Protestant, German or Italian.¹³ This is because, need and labor when elevated to such universality, create a powerful network of interdependence and community within themselves.¹⁴

From the analysis of Hegel's approach, Moltmann clarified that the age of individuality was also, dialectically, the age of mass organization. To wit, the age of conformity and mediocrity offers people a vast array of personal preferences, judgements, and opinions, allowing the most haphazard assortment of unofficial groupings to exist within the major organization's constant bureaucratic uniformity. Accordingly, the era of unprecedented conformity in behavior, is simultaneously the era of the unique discovery of the individual soul and intellect, thus the trend of weakening social bonds is what births conformity and individualism.¹⁵

The development of civil society as an age of conformity and individuality warranted reflection from Moltmann on what became of the Christian church in its social significance. He offered that both religion and culture become functionless when they can no longer acquire social relevance and thus become breeding ground for many ineffectual ideas and viewpoints.¹⁶ This aligns with functional theory of religion argued by Durkheim.¹⁷ Moltmann identified that contrary to New Testament theological outlook, Christianity during the nineteenth century became a private cult (*cultus privatus*) instead of a public cult (*cultus publicus*), the cult of the absolute which once was protector and preserver of public ceremonials (*sacra publica*). The old accord between church (*ecclesia*) and society (*societas*) was now dented by the rise of industrial revolution. Thus, religion was private; inwardly beneficial and edifying to its adherents as the religiosity of the individual while ceasing to be a public social duty.¹⁸

¹¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 308.

¹² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 308.

¹³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 308.

¹⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 308.

¹⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 309.

¹⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 310.

¹⁷ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, 2nd Ed (London: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 8.

¹⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 310.

Consequently, civil society as a society of needs, effectively emancipated itself from religious needs of the masses. Moltmann emphasized that many revivalists and pietist movements furthered this emancipation. The church in modern society accordingly developed a theology of pastoral care akin to its self-consciousness as a custodian of character for a materialist society. After Christianity lost its public function in modern society, it was absolved of its responsibility to integrate the core of modern society and to stand for the supreme duty or highest goal of society, which is the adoration of God. Notwithstanding, Christianity in modern society still offers limitless chances for self-improvement and self-propulsion of the individual. Duly, it can perform dialectical functions of offering relief for people in modern society even despite the widespread social immobility imposed on Christianity as a matter of religion.¹⁹

Public Role of Religion in Modern Society

Religion as the Cult of New Subjectivity

Moltmann reflects that modern industrial society expects religion to be effectual as the cult of the new subjectivity after religion's transition from the cult of the absolute. Alluding to Weber's claim that rationalization has disenchanted the world, Moltmann concedes that secularization has stripped the cosmological world of its gods, claiming the gods of cosmological metaphysics are dead.²⁰ To wit, the divine in the sense of the transcendent has disappeared from the world of nature, history and society. He accepts Heidegger's metaphysic of subjecthood,²¹ in which the world of objects is submitted to planning by human subjects. Identifying the category of individuality as a product of society²², the category of personality is subsequently regarded an institution in the single instance.²³ The world thus surrendered to the reason of man becomes material for technical reshaping by man. Herein appears in the view of Moltmann the doctrine of faith, which he identifies as a theology of existence, the relation of man to himself. This faith is the receiving of oneself from God and assigns its home in that subjectivity and spontaneity of man.²⁴ Faith localizes in the ethical reality determined by man's decisions and encounters rather than by social behavior and rational laws of economic circumstances.

The Christian ethic within this cult of new subjectivity is then reduced to an ethical demand to accept oneself and take responsibility for the world in general. It is however no longer able to give pertinent ethical instructions for ordering social and political life, thus quitting the realm of justice and social order. Justice, social order and political righteousness once rendered void in the cult of the new subjectivity are understood positivistically as pure organization of jurisprudence in law and power.²⁵ This localized faith is therefore considered as socially irrelevant due to its non-committal character - its attitude of refusing to take sides in socially irrelevant faith disputes. It is thus a religion void of decision with no binding character in social life. Hence such theology threatens to become a religious ideology of

¹⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 311.

²⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 312.

²¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 312.

²² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 315.

²³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 315.

²⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 314.

²⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 315.

romanticist subjectivity, a religion within the sphere of individuality relieved of all social obligations.

Religion as the Cult of Co-Humanity

Modern society further expects religion to be effectual as the cult of co-humanity. True human community is that in which man finds himself surrendering himself to the other, community between man and man. Society however is an artificial, arbitrary arrangement between men for practical and businesslike purposes, with the dominant factor being its rational purposefulness, convention and businesslike approach rather than the will to be a self. Hence society per Moltmann's analysis is a pseudo-community, an antithesis of community.²⁶ He alludes that the idea of community was expounded in *Communist Manifesto*, the revolution with the goal of free association of free individuals. The revolution sought to counter the effect of capitalist society towards a future in which man is the premier being, and individuals reciprocate love only for love, trust only for trust, towards the holistic reclamation of man.

The idea of community is further present in the socially critical and socially therapeutic teaching of the Catholic church. The Catholic social teaching, *Mater et Magistra* emphasizes the need to present the form and substance of a true community wherein individual members are considered and treated as persons and encouraged to take an active part in the ordering of their lives. It further stresses that for every enterprise, private or public, every effort should be made to ensure the enterprise is a community of people. This is to facilitate precious contribution to the formation of a world community in which all members are conscious of their duties and rights, working on the basis of equality for the bringing about of the universal common good. It is significant that the Catholic church has a well-developed and clearly articulated teaching on human community which aims to safeguard a world community premised on egalitarian principle of equality and the utilitarian vision of universal common good. Conversely, it is disconcerting that many Pentecostal Charismatic churches in the present time lack a clear well-articulated vision of what entails a community of people.

Noting that the ideal community was however hampered by progress of industrial revolution, Moltmann avers that it was also an age of small specialist groups with confidential relationships within narrow circles.²⁷ Accordingly, Alexis de Tocqueville observed of those in the American democracy in the 1940s that one's children and private friends constituted for them the whole of mankind and thus existing only for oneself without noticing or touching other fellow citizens.²⁸ Sadly, not only has this aspect of American democracy's tendency of narrow social circles remained over time but has traversed across many nations, including communal African communities, mutilating the rich tapestry of inclusive social ties. Moltmann is nonetheless optimistic in differing with notions that the small social ties of intimate groups combine to form a sort of cement for the total structure of society as not constituting the full picture.

On the contrary, Moltmann avers that between the small intimate groups the church as a congregation can have its place and function as a refuge of the inner life, away from the

²⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 317.

²⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 319.

²⁸ Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. II, trans. Henry Reeve, (Boston, MA: J. Allyn, 1876), 318-579.

supposedly soulless world of affairs. Moltmann posits that Christian groups and communities can become islands of genuine co-humanity and authentic life, a kind of Noah's ark in the rough sea of social estrangement.²⁹ Thus the church fulfills a social role by becoming a rallying point for integration. Though it may not alter the stern reality of the loss of the human in society, it offers a dialectical compensation and a disburdening of the soul for man to cope with his official existence in the alternating rhythm of community and society, private and public. Various persuasions of Christian theology viewing the true church as a genuine community; as "spiritual church" (R. Sohm), "spiritual community of persons" (E. Brunner), "community of faith" and "community in the transcendent" (R. Bultmann), are according to Moltmann, in harmony with the social significance of community.³⁰ The church is thus portrayed as an absolutely non-worldly phenomenon in contrast with the premeditated concept of society. Within this co-humanity, the responsibility of the Christian Church for the world becomes conspicuous, nonetheless it cannot alter the official activity of society.³¹

Religion as the Cult of the Institution

A third role in which modern industrial society expects religion to be effectual is in its official claims as an institution. Moltmann observed that post-Enlightenment culture in the global West consolidated itself in new institutions. The institutionalization of official, social life stems from mankind's permanent need of security and thus relieve man of the permanent pressure of decision to which man is subjected in times of uncertainty.³² Moltmann claimed institutionalization of public life in highly industrialized societies produced a perceptible disappearance of ideologies. It must be emphasized that institutions are established upon predominant ideologies, thus the seeming disappearance of ideologies in society might be attributed to elimination of trivial ideologies. Accordingly, Moltmann posits Christian religion was left unopposed on the field of ideologies and world views, thus Christian confessions strongly countered ideologies like Darwinism.³³ Christian theology then assumed a position to assert a neo-dogmatism, positing things which could neither be proved nor contested on the ground of real experience.³⁴

Within this setting, mankind delegates to the church as an institution, problems regarding one's own believing decision, leaving detailed questions to theological specialists. Matters of theological disputes are therefore seen as confessional witch-hunting and banished from public life.³⁵ Ecclesiastical institution of religious modes of conduct also acquire a new social significance resulting in a general non-committal recognition of the religious institutions as the guarantors of life's security in general. The institutionalization of the church albeit its non-committal outlook however has the effect of becoming an ultimate institution overshadowing the institutional security of life and from which security is expected against the ultimate fears of human existence.³⁶

²⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 320.

³⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 321.

³¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 321.

³² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 321.

³³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 322.

³⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 323.

³⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 323.

³⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 323.

Christianity in View of the Kingdom of God

Consequently, Christian religion as prescribed by its social milieu observed by Moltmann was socially axiomatic in its respective roles as cults of subjectivity, co-humanity and the institution. This is neither due to the good nor ill will of individual persons, nor to theologies determined by historical ideas but as Moltmann alludes, a new Babylonian exile necessitating an exodus³⁷. He rightly asserts that Christianity must breakout of these static social roles to serve a different purpose in hope of the one whom Christianity believes. He proposes Christianity's resistance as a group incapable of being assimilated in the modern integration of everything with everything else. This does not imply a violent resistance but a dialectical tension of Christian hope with the conditions of arbitrary society. God's kingdom objective is a reminder to all humans that his interest in the things that border on humanity's total life will not be dried up by human weaknesses and limitations. His presence shall always be in the experiences of his revelation and humanity must respond appropriately.

Dirk J. Smit buttresses the point further that, Christians have a moral responsibility to God by revealing God to human history according to the pattern of Jesus.³⁸ Christian theology has its central theme that is focused on Christ Jesus as the symbol of hope for the eminent revealing of God's reign to be established in the history of human existence.

For instance, in recent years, the issue of illegal small-scale mining known in Ghanaian local parlance as *galamsey*,³⁹ has been a national canker, devouring vast swathes of arable land and polluting major water bodies from which the Ghana Water Company relies on to distribute water across the nation. This development is endemic to the health of the Ghanaian populace. Rooted in this eco-theological menace are the persistent problematic of extensive disregard for human dignity, discipline, and corruption. Throughout this blighting scourge of national life, the zest the church exhibited in canvassing monetary support for the controversial National Cathedral project⁴⁰ while endorsing and advocating for the project was comparatively lacking in intensity and momentum towards combating *galamsey*. It must be noted that the National Cathedral project is a brainchild of Ghana's outgoing President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo as his personal vow to God towards becoming president. The project which was bedevilled with strife and controversy from the onset, nonetheless, enjoyed massive support from the church. However, it was eventually inundated with massive corruption allegations even though it was originally anticipated that only private funds were to be expended towards the project. This alarming situation evokes public debate in the nation about whether the church in Ghana seems more interested in superficial religiousness than tackling real-life challenges that hamper the flourishing of human souls and developing the soul of the nation. The Ghanaian church must neither be silent nor inactive amidst this grave eco-theological crises threatening this generation. Consequently, the Ghanaian church must necessarily shun its tendencies of being solely a confessional church to

³⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 324.

³⁸ Dirk J. Smit, *Essays in Public Theology* (Stellenbosch, South Africa: Sun Press, 2007), 198.

³⁹ Michael Eduful et al., "The Illegal Artisanal and Small-scale mining (Galamsey) 'Menace' in Ghana: Is Military-Style Approach the Answer?," *Resources Policy* 68 (October 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2020.101732>.

⁴⁰ Kent Mensah, "Can of Worms: In Ghana, two more trustees resign from scandal-hit national cathedral," *The Africa Report.com* October 26, 2023 <https://www.theafricareport.com/325930/in-ghana-two-more-trustees-resign-from-scandal-hit-national-cathedral/> accessed: September 25, 2024.

becoming a church for the world, that concerns itself with the scathing issues plaguing Ghanaian social and economic life and positing serious addresses from the pulpit to the pews, and the corridors of power.

It is in this conflict laden context that Moltmann envisages a fruitful partnership with society wherein Christianity communicates its own hope to society. He clarifies however that the task of Christianity is not to oppose societies ideological glorification of things but to resist the institutional stabilization of things by raising the question of meaning. The intent is to make things uncertain and keep them moving and elastic in the process of history. This is necessary in Moltmann's narrative because hope alone keeps life, both public and social, flowing and free.⁴¹

Christianity's break from the static social axiomatic then enables it to exist beyond itself. This can only be done by considering its aim and why it exists. The existence and modes of behavior in Christianity could be grasped through an enquiry into its mission while its essence could be fathomed through enquiry into the future on which Christianity sets its hopes and expectations.⁴² Wendel Ellis asserts that, the ethics of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God is not just a call to repentance or a demand on the people to bring about a perfect society, but a response material to the experience of the goodness of God to all humanity for their peace and tranquil relationships.⁴³ To this end, Moltmann, conceptualizes the church via New Testament theology as the community of eschatological salvation, consisting of a gathering in and sending out of this community in terms of eschatological expectation.⁴⁴ Thus, the risen Christ calls, justifies, sanctifies, and in so doing gathers and sends men into his eschatological future for the world. Hence, the church perpetually exists in expectation of the risen Lord not merely for itself but also for the world.⁴⁵ Christianity therefore subsists within the horizon of eschatological expectation of the kingdom of God.

As a result, eschatological orientation of the church is seen in everything for which and from which the church lives.⁴⁶ For example, Moltmann recognizes eschatological tenets of already and not yet within sacral things as the word of God, baptism and the Lord's Supper. For instance, the word of God is presented as an eschatological gift within which the hidden future of God for the world is present in the form of promise and awakened hope. Here, the word of God by which the church lives, is open for the future as the proclaimed word which is still outstanding although it is coming to pass. Likewise, baptism is also eschatological in nature because through it, people who are baptized into the past death of Christ are sealed for the future of the kingdom that is being brought by the risen Christ. Only an eschatological church therefore has the right to perform baptism as a judicial and creative act which derives from its openness towards that which is yet only on the way. The Lord's Supper is also viewed eschatologically rather than as a cult and mystery. The congregation at the Lord's Supper are not yet in possession of the sacral presence of the Absolute but are expectantly waiting, seeking communion with the coming Lord.

⁴¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 324.

⁴² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 325.

⁴³ Wendel Willis, *The Kingdom of God in the 20th century Interpretations* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 73.

⁴⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 325.

⁴⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 325.

⁴⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 325.

Christianity therefore from Moltmann's narrative is essentially a community of those who premised on the resurrection of Christ wait for the kingdom of God and whose life is determined by this expectation.⁴⁷ It receives itself and nature always in expectation and hope from the coming of the Lord. Its suffering, work and action in and upon the world must also be determined by its hopes for the world. The Christian Church which follows Christ's mission to the world must also follow Christ's service to the world. It has its nature as the body of Christ only when in specific acts of service, it is obedient to its mission to the world. Its existence is completely bound to the fulfilling of its service. It is nothing in itself except in existing for others. The Church then is the Church of God where it is a Church for the world.⁴⁸

Notably, since Christ's mission to the world was witnessed in various acts of compassion and social justice, the Ghanaian church must transition from proclamation or evangelism only to inculcate mercy and social justice in the mission of the church. This holistic or integral mission advocated by Rene Padilla⁴⁹ was further affirmed in June 1983 by the Consultation on the Church in Response to Human Need.⁵⁰

Church for the world implies that personal faith, fellowship of the congregation, and church as an institution loyally fulfills the social roles modern society expects to be useful. It does not however mean a solidarity bereft of ideas, or co-humanity devoid of hopes but service and work in the world as and where God expects it.⁵¹ Thus the will and expectation of God are voiced in the mission of Christ and the apostolate, and the church lays claim to the whole of humanity in mission within the eschatological expectation of the coming kingdom of God, righteousness, peace, freedom, and dignity of man. The Church serves the world in order that the world transforms itself from what it is to what it is promised to be. Ultimately, church for the world implies church for the kingdom of God and renewing of the world.⁵² Aptly, Christian Church conveys the society in which it lives into its own horizon of eschatological expectation of the fulfillment of justice, life, humanity and sociability. It communicates in its own decisions in history, its openness and readiness for this future and its elasticity towards it.⁵³

Missionary proclamation of the gospel is one of the ways the church brings society into its own horizon. Through missions the church infects people with hope; the hope of the coming kingdom of God that transforms the earth, which braces people for action and suffering.⁵⁴ Thus, the church through missions does not aspire to become a cult of the absolute, claiming sovereignty for itself and officials, rather the whole body of Christians engages in apostolate of hope for the world. It is through this that the church realizes its essence as that which makes it the church of God, not constituting salvation for the world so that conveying

⁴⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 326.

⁴⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 327.

⁴⁹ Rene Padilla, "The Mission of the Church in Light of the Kingdom of God," *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* 1 (1984): 16-20, <https://doi.org/10.1177/026537888400100206>.

⁵⁰ Lausanne Movement. "Transformation: The Church in Response to Human Need." *Lausanne Movement*. June 12, 1983. Accessed September 2, 2024. <https://lausanne.org/content/statement/transformation-the-church-in-response-to-human-need>.

⁵¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 327.

⁵² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 328.

⁵³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 328.

⁵⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 328.

the world into the church (churchifying the world) would not necessarily imply the salvation of the world.⁵⁵ The church which exists as an instrument and a servant of the kingdom⁵⁶ is identified by Moltmann as an arrow sent out into the world pointing to the future, coming salvation.⁵⁷ Vorster agrees with Moltmann that the church is the spear point of the kingdom⁵⁸. It must be noted that an arrow equally strikes as it points; thus, it can be adduced further to the arrow metaphor that the church as an arrow strikes the target of the kingdom of God. Hence the church wholly surrendered in the hands of the risen Lord whom it believes, can be a dynamic conduit making ready a people for the coming kingdom.

Accordingly, eschatological background of Old Testament prophecies assume fulfillment in the Christian mission of hope where Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, come to faith obedience and attain human dignity and eschatological freedom. Reconciliation with God (forgiveness of sins and abolition of godlessness), as the goal of Christian mission therefore extends individual rescue from the evil world, salvation of the soul and comfort for troubled conscience.⁵⁹ It also signifies realization of eschatological hope of justice, humanizing and socializing of humanity and peace for all creation.⁶⁰

Christianity's historical underrating of this other side of reconciliation, according to Moltmann, is due to Christians no longer understanding themselves eschatologically and neglecting such eschatological expectations to fanatics and sects.⁶¹ Nonetheless, it is exclusively in this eschatological expectation that Christianity ditches its social relief functions expected by society to offer lively impulses that shapes social, public and political life of man. By turning these expectations into present activity through the power of love which unites strong and weak, slaves and free, into a new community, Christianity embraces the twofold horizons of faith obedience among Gentiles, in addition to Old Testament eschatological hopes of righteousness, peace, blessing and fullness of life.⁶²

The Calling of Christians in Society

Consequently, Christian mission is not merely the propagation of faith and hope but the transformation of life since hope and expectation have a bearing on life, action and suffering in the history of society. It will not suffice to conceive that kingdom of God only has to do with individual persons in light of the abstract idea of an a-social human personality. This is because the righteousness and peace of the promised kingdom are terms of relationship which have an import on relationships of people to each other and things. Thus, the life of the body to be offered as a sacrifice in daily obedience (Romans 12:1) also includes social and public life. Further not to be conformed (Romans 12:1) is not the mere transformation in

⁵⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 328.

⁵⁶ Padilla, "The Mission of the Church in Light of the Kingdom of God." See also Art McPhee, "The Kingdom Life and the Witness of the Church," *The Asbury Journal* 71, no. 1 (2016): 7.

⁵⁷ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 328.

⁵⁸ Jakobus Marthinus Vorster, "Kingdom, Church and Civil Society: A Theological Paradigm for Civil Action," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 71, no. 3 (April 2015): 2, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i3.2816>.

⁵⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 329.

⁶⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 329.

⁶¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 329.

⁶² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 329.

oneself but transformation in opposition and creative expectation in the face of the world in which one believes, hopes and loves.⁶³ The hope of the Gospel therefore has a liberating relation not only to religions and ideologies but to the factual, practical life of men and the relationships in which life is lived.⁶⁴ A comprehensive approach to a life of transformation is necessary because believers are expected to fulfil the purpose of Jesus Christ, which is to save the world. The kind of metamorphosis that heralds a favourable influence on people's lives, readying them for the present and future of our salvation—the reason Christ took on human form and entered the world. Put another way, the promise of a fulfilled kingdom in Christ can only come to pass when converted followers of the faith start acting as instruments in God's hands for the ongoing transformation of the world. Thus, whereas preceding decades of global evangelicalism emphasized personal transformation, it is expedient that Christians respond to their calling in Christ the Lord and liberator of all creation to transform the *cosmos*, the ordered creation wherein man lives and flourishes in view of the horizon of the kingdom.

Accordingly, Christian hope seeks opportunities of bringing history into better correspondence with the promised future. It therefore endeavors to lead modern institutions away from their immanent tendency towards stabilization and historicize them, making them uncertain and open to the future it hopes for. This is done through practical opposition to all things, calling them into question as they are for creative reshaping. Christian hope according to Moltmann raises the question of meaning in institutionalized life because it cannot put up with abstract relationships of modern social life and finds the beneficial unquestioning of life as a new form of vanity and death. What it means from the perspective of Moltmann is that a true search for meaning must dwell in a true sense of realistic relationship between faith and emerging social life issues confronting the people on a daily basis. Thus, Christian hope is in search of other institutions because it expects true eternal life and dignity of man as well as truly just relationships from the coming kingdom of God.⁶⁵ This is what Moltmann elucidates as the calling of Christians in society. Consequently, the reformation's emphasis on the universal priesthood of all believers, implied humanity's earthly undertakings acquired new theological significance. Everyone who believes and hopes had to offer their life in the service of God, the work of His kingdom, and the freedom of faith since the Gospel call is issued to all.

Accordingly, through earthly callings in services, commissions and charismata towards the church and human society the mission and call of the church takes place.⁶⁶ Earthly service becomes the means through which the Lordship of Christ and freedom of faith penetrates the world as the city of Christ in which he displays his kingdom. The Christian life no longer consisted of fleeing the world and spiritual resignation from it but engaged in attack upon the world and a calling in the world.⁶⁷

Progressively, however, revolutionary social movements caused reformers to neglect discipleship in the freedom of faith to concentrate on concern for order and preservation.⁶⁸

⁶³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 330.

⁶⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 330.

⁶⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 330.

⁶⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 331.

⁶⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, trans. Neville Horton Smith (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 223.

⁶⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 331.

Thus it became obscure within the reformation who appoints earthly callings. This new idea of callings led to the doctrine of two kingdoms. Thus, certain abiding basic orders such as marriages and family, church and state are called God's 'created orders', 'preserving orders', 'mandates', 'fundamental ordinances or institutions given along with human nature. The place of call then was seen as predetermined so that the call and obedience of faith can only bring inner modification in the predetermined vocational role. This vocational role in society had in terms of theology of creation or history to be accepted as God-given.⁶⁹

Accordingly, the Confession of Augsburg XVI noted that the Gospel brings no new laws and ordinances into the world neither does it dissolve economic and political orders but mainly demands both the preservation of the ordinances of God and the exercise of charity in all such ordinances.⁷⁰ This set a highly conservative stamp on the vocational ethics of Protestantism. The determination of the concrete historic form of the above-mentioned orders was left to the prevailing powers. The vocational ethics of Protestantism postulated a second call subsequent to the inner call of God heard in the gospel.⁷¹ Thus the call to our calling comes from both voices together; the call of God in the gospel of Christ, and from the call of the God of history. Emil Brunner remarked of providence as the place of the action, and here and now the place given by God.⁷²

The call to discipleship of Christ as Moltmann observes is however not aimed at faithful and loving fulfillment of our calling under prescribed conditions but on the contrary joins in working for the kingdom of God that is to come.⁷³ He emphasizes that the call according to the New Testament is once for all, irrevocable and immutable, and has its eschatological goal in the hope to which God calls us. Our callings are, however, historic, changing, changeable, temporally limited, and are therefore to be shaped in the process of being accepted in terms of call, hope and love. Moltmann emphasizes that the call always appears in the singular, yet the callings, roles, functions and relationships which make a social claim on man always appear in an open multiplicity. Since modern society lays open to man a multitude of chances and demands of him elasticity, adaptability and imaginativeness, the point of reference for man therefore is his call which gives him identity and continuity, and for which he seeks to live.⁷⁴ Thus the criterion for the choice of a calling and acceptance and shaping of the process of socialization is constituted solely by the mission of Christian hope.

The eschatological horizon of expectation of the kingdom of God, righteousness, peace, freedom and humanity for all men, with its formative effect on the present leads a man in missionary hope to oppose and suffer under the inadequacies of the present, brings man into conflict with the present form of society.⁷⁵ Only Christians who no longer understand their eschatological mission as a mission for the future of the world and of man can identify their call with the existing circumstances in the social roles of their callings and be content to fit in. Where the call is seen in the horizon of the eschatological expectation, believing

⁶⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 331.

⁷⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 331.

⁷¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 332.

⁷² Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, trans Olive Wyon (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press: 1937), 200.

⁷³ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 333.

⁷⁴ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 333.

⁷⁵ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 334.

obedience and discipleship must then be understood as creative discipleship and creative love.

Creative Discipleship

Creative discipleship consists in the theoretical and practical recognition of the structure of historic process and development inherent in the situation requiring to be ordered and thus of the potentiality and the future of that situation. Creative discipleship when constituted in love which institutes community, set things right and puts them in order, becomes eschatologically possible through the Christian hope's prospect of the future of God's kingdom and of man. It constitutes in the open-ended history of man, the appropriate counterpart to that which is promised and is to come.⁷⁶ Bloch refers to that kind of creative expectation as presentative eschatology, hope which sets about criticizing and transforming the present due to its openness to the universal future of God's kingdom.⁷⁷ Accordingly, Christian hope finds new resolution for the persistent problematic of 'man and society', or 'freedom and estrangement' or 'man and work' and Moltmann consequently, he postulates it is not transcendental reflection that restores man with possibilities and freedom but rather hope which leads man to expend himself, simultaneously grasping continually new possibilities from the expected future⁷⁸.

Aptly, the Ghanaian church needs an overhaul of its discipleship dynamics towards creative discipleship that reorients Christians in Ghana towards the practical recognition of defective religious, social, economic, political, health and environmental structures rife with malaise and practically empowers Christians to be agents of change advancing new, bold, and effective propositions to the persistent problematic of the extensive disregard for human dignity, discipline, corruption among others.

Creative Hope

In this venture, Moltmann emphasizes that human life must be risked, expending itself if it would be won to gain firmness and future. Aptly, the horizon of expectation which makes expending oneself meaningful is that which embraces the areas and realms in and for which the work of self-expending takes place. Thus the social institutions, roles and functions are only means to this self-expending that is to be shaped creatively by love in order that men live together in more just, humane, and peacefully in mutual recognition of their human dignity and freedom.⁷⁹ Thus social institutions, functions and roles are not to be taken as reliefs, estrangement or numbing of life but as ways and historic forms of self-expending, events and processes that are open towards the future of God. Consequently, creative hope, which upholds both faith and love, is what historicizes these conditions and opposes their immanent tendencies toward stabilization and beneficial unquestioning of life.⁸⁰

Subsequently, in believing viewpoint, hope in God's future frees this present world from all attempts at self-redemption or self-production through labor and becomes open for loving self-expending in the interests of humanizing conditions and realization of justice in

⁷⁶ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 335.

⁷⁷ Ernst Bloch, *Tübingen Introduction to Philosophy II* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Publishing, 1964), 176.

⁷⁸ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 335-337.

⁷⁹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 337.

⁸⁰ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 338.

light of the coming justice of God. Hope of resurrection must therefore bring new understanding of the world as neither the heaven of self-realization advocated in idealism nor the hell of estrangement purported by romanticism and existentialism.⁸¹ The world according to Moltmann is not yet finished but engaged in history, it is therefore a world of possibilities in which we can serve the future, promised truth, righteousness and peace. The reasons that the glory of self-realization and misery of self-estrangement both arise out of hopelessness. Moltmann thus asserts that this is an age of diaspora, of sowing in hope, self-surrender and sacrifice because it stands in the horizon of the future⁸².

The age of diaspora therefore fashions for us, a portrait of the church as a diaspora community. The idea of the Ghanaian church as an exodus church therefore can be stressed as the church in diaspora community. By this is implied that the redeemed people of God in the nation of Ghana, are tasked to disclose not only to Ghanaians but the present world the horizon of the future of Christ as it exists as the church in the world. The disclosure of this hope must steer clear from false assurances of escapism and disillusioned pretexts of heaven on earth. Creative hope should induce in Christians the persuasion of sowing in hope and sacrifice whiles surrendering to God in anticipation of the new horizon of the coming kingdom which is already inaugurated by Christ and not yet consummated.

Transformative Ethics of hope and Christian Mission

In Ethics of Hope, Moltmann further asserted a Christian transformative ethic, which is neither a separatist flight out of the world nor conformist responsibility in the world.⁸³ Thus totality of salvation is grounded in a testimony of the Christian mission in which salvation encompasses the soul and body both of individual persons and human community, and creation. In this respect, salvation functions alongside four interconnected social dimensions. They are the dimension of struggle for economic justice against human-human exploitation, struggle for human dignity against political oppression, struggle for solidarity against alienation, struggle for hope against despair in individual life.⁸⁴ Nonetheless, the different gifts and responsibilities of Christians imply that diverse situations require different priorities. Noting that there is one Spirit and one salvation, Moltmann rightly specified that salvation becomes all-embracing if Christians embrace the world with the heart of Christ.⁸⁵

Ultimately, Moltmann recognized the Christian community as a moral agent that actively changes the plight of the suffering rather than conforming to the world or fleeing from it. He states that Christian eschatological ethics of hope, which expects the future in light of the resurrection of Christ uses the knowledge of change to specify transformative action which anticipates the new creation promised by God and initiated by Christ.⁸⁶ Key themes in this transformative ethics include justice for the poor, liberation of the oppressed, healing of the sick and exalting the humiliated. Moltmann differentiates this transformative ethics from apocalyptic Lutheran ethics because it incorporates principle of responsibility for the word in

⁸¹ Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 338.

⁸² Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 338.

⁸³ Jurgen Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope* (London: SCM Press, 2012), 40.

⁸⁴ Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 37.

⁸⁵ Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 37.

⁸⁶ Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 41.

Christian life and activities.⁸⁷ It is also distinct from Christocratic Reformed ethics because it incorporates principle of resistance in its transforming anticipations of Christ's advent. Moreover, it is distinct from quietist Anabaptists ethics because it incorporates principle of an alternative life in the active intervention in the social and public processes of life.

Reflecting on modern society's decline into poverty, Moltmann emphasizes social and psychological causes premised on the ideology of growth within modern society's pursuit of progress. Moltmann observed overpopulation as responsible for plunging entire regions into poverty. In this context of overpopulation, poverty is regarded as the worst form of pollution that plagues people.⁸⁸ Also, the ideology of political capitalism with its assertion of a deficit in material goods was responsible for driving people into existential anxiety because they are made to clamor for those goods in keeping with their social prestige.⁸⁹ This fear-based approach in turn drives competition in which solidarity is abandoned, stimulating social struggles. Thus, what should be shared across by the members of society is considered as something to be unduly grasped without repercussions. Accordingly, society becomes bereft of both public spirit (commitment to common good and solidarity) and trust.⁹⁰ The loss of these is attributable to society's discrimination against rich and poor, impoverishment of citizens of supposed third world states, and differences between present and future generations. Such consequences as Moltmann rightly discussed are not inevitable but can be rehabilitated, asserting that it is possible to have another world devoid of this malady of political capitalism which privatizes profits and socializes losses.⁹¹

The reality of poverty in Ghana conforms to Moltmann's elucidation of the maladies of capitalism and its inherent deprivation of socialized losses and privatized wealth. The greed of a few individuals is usually at the apex of the social pyramid, be it political elites, government appointees, captains of industry, religious leaders, and all who are privileged to be positioned at the top of the social ladder often results in amalgamation of national resources to be expatriated through foreign investments, thus skyrocketing inflation which leads to rippling effects of many untold economic hardships. As envisaged by Moltmann, there could be a recovery from such nemesis of poverty crippling many Ghanaians socio-economically. Herein lies the task of the church to be a church of the poor⁹² by situating itself in the plight of the poor and exercising its prophetic role for the welfare of all Ghanaians, particularly the poor in the nation.

Accordingly, the idea of community shaped by solidarity was postulated by Moltmann as a qualitative alternate to the problem of poverty and wealth.⁹³ In such a community, rich in trusting relationships, people support each other through grassroots initiatives rather than bureaucratic sources. Though Ghanaian community tends to exhibit solidarity in social life, it falters in demonstrating same in economic and political life.

⁸⁷ Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 41.

⁸⁸ Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 50.

⁸⁹ Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 47-48.

⁹⁰ Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 48.

⁹¹ Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 48.

⁹² Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988). See also Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological Reading of Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Paul Burns and Francis McDonagh (Maryknoll, NY: Burns & Oates; Orbis Books, 1994). <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472549877>.

⁹³ Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 66.

Humanity, as Moltmann claimed however only has a future if it entails a common future⁹⁴. Life's richness therefore emerges when people collaborate towards a common purpose of mutual help.⁹⁵

Notably, citizen action groups, co-operatives and trade unions originated as spontaneous associations in convenient groups before evolving into professional bureaucracies. In a community of solidarity, poverty can be conveniently lived when it is justly shared by all in mutual terms, as people in the same boat support each other.⁹⁶ Erosion of equality thus marks the end of this form of mutual help; hence injustice is responsible for the distresses of poverty and just anger is provoked with dissolution of community.⁹⁷ The reverse of this community in solidarity the emphasis on individuality which makes society susceptible to manipulation, via *divide et impera*, the Roman dictum of divide and rule.⁹⁸ Against this, it is argued that the shared life of community in solidarity consolidates the power of the group to create a common good to which each has an equitable entitlement. As such dictatorships, oppression, and injustice tumble when people amalgamate as *we are the people*. Similarly, churches come of age when Christian believers amalgamate as *we are the church*.⁹⁹

Ghana's rich communal solidarity poignantly showcased at festivals, funerals, marriage ceremonies, child naming and other elements of social life must extend to the civic realms of political and economic orders which influences the social order. Once again, the Ghanaian church will have to utilize its influence in this regard. Through its social teaching, public discourse, press releases and advocacy, amidst its life of moderation and *koinonia*, the sharing together in all things, the church will be able to influence the political and economic paradigm towards the expectation of the kingdom of God.

Conclusion

The article has established that, church within the horizon of the public sphere is relevant in the modern age even though advances in globalization, characterized by technological-artificial intelligence, capitalist market and political economy threatens the church in the public space. The *ecclesia* which lives within the horizon of expectation of the kingdom of God, as a *cultus publicus* influences *societas*. This community of eschatological salvation, per New Testament theology gathers in and sends out people anticipating an eschatological future for the world. As a result, the exodus church, which lays claim to all of humanity in its mission, is nothing in itself except it exists for others as the Church of God when it is a Church for the world in service and work to all humanity, particularly, the oppressed and marginalized.

In dialogue with Moltmann, it is the assertion of the authors that the Ghanaian church must transition from confessionalism to pragmatism, by adapting holistic ministry that utilizes advocacy, mercy and social justice instead of solely resorting to proclamation and evangelism. This is imperative owing to the overwhelming numbers of Christians in Ghana

⁹⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 167.

⁹⁵ Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 66.

⁹⁶ Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 66.

⁹⁷ Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 66.

⁹⁸ Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 66.

⁹⁹ Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope*, 66.

which makes Christianity a penetrating religion and the lifeworld of the Ghanaian people, in terms of cultural aspirations, socio-economic life and the political choices of the populace. Accordingly, Moltmann's theology has affirmed our hypothesis that the socio-religious milieu in Ghana situates the Christian Church within the locus of responsibility for contributing to the quality of life of the people. Therefore, application of the transformative ethic of Christian faith, principles and practice in all spheres of public life can be influential in improving the quality of life of the Ghanaian people both in terms of poverty eradication, conservation of the environment and safeguarding the health of the populace. By so doing, the church in Ghana serves as a church in diaspora, a church for the world whose ongoing exodus transforms various strata of public life in Ghana, mainly political and economic life in expectation of the kingdom of God.

Accordingly, the eschatological orientation of the church is witnessed both ontologically and epistemologically, in everything for which and from which the church lives. Consequently, the word of God becomes open for the future as the proclaimed word which although coming to pass, is still outstanding. This necessitates for the exodus church, creative forms of discipleship that precipitates creative hope towards discovery of new solutions for the persistent problematic of 'man and society'. This creative discipleship premised in love is sacrosanct. New forms of creative discipleship therefore need to be advocated for the church to transform both theoretical and practical dimensions of structures of modern life requiring to be ordered synchronously within the new horizon of the kingdom.

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Embracing Christian Values: Positive Relationships and Academic Achievement in Higher Education

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Received: 26/08/2024

Accepted: 17/09/2024

Published: 30/09/2024

Abstract

This literature review and analysis intricately examines the dynamic interplay between educators and students within the realm of higher education, with a keen focus on the spiritual dimensions elucidated by Christian principles and biblical wisdom. Rooted in the fundamental belief that education embodies a sacred journey, this study delves deep into the profound impact of positive relationships on both academic achievements and spiritual maturation. By establishing meaningful connections between contemporary educational practices and timeless biblical teachings, the research sheds light on how Christian virtues, such as love, compassion, and empathy, serve as foundational pillars in cultivating a spiritually enriching learning environment. The synthesis of empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, and biblical insights not only enhances our understanding of the transformative potential of positive relationships in higher education but also underscores their pivotal role in fostering holistic development on a spiritual level. Through this comprehensive exploration, the study contributes significantly to the discourse on the symbiotic relationship between academic success and spiritual growth, emphasizing the importance of nurturing positive relationships as a cornerstone of holistic education in higher learning institutions.

Keywords: Higher Education, Positive Relationships, Christian Principles, Biblical Wisdom, Academic Success

Introduction

Education, perceived as a sacred journey where minds are shaped and destinies unfold, assumes profound spiritual significance within the Christian worldview.¹ The dynamic interplay between educators and students transcends the confines of conventional pedagogy, embodying a collaborative quest for knowledge guided by divine providence. In the expansive realm of higher education, these relationships are imbued with a sacred role, akin to celestial constellations directing a collective pilgrimage toward enlightenment and spiritual growth. This paper

¹ Octavio Javier Esqueda, "Biblical Worldview: The Christian Higher Education Foundation for Learning," *Christian Higher Education* 13, no. 2 (March 2014): 91–100, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2014.872495>.

endeavors to explore the intricate and profound importance of cultivating positive relationships in higher education² through the lens of Christian principles. It seeks to unravel the divine tapestry connecting these relationships with academic outcomes and individual development, while also drawing parallels between the principles of relationship building in education and the timeless wisdom encapsulated in the Holy Bible.

Background

Within the Christian ethos, the classroom is not merely a space for intellectual exchange but a sacred forum where God's wisdom intertwines with human understanding.³ The interpersonal dynamic between educators and students is perceived as a sacred covenant, reflecting the divine call to nurture and guide. Over the years, Christian educators have acknowledged the sanctity of the teacher-student relationship, recognizing its role in shaping not only the academic journey but also the spiritual pilgrimage. Positive relationships,⁴ grounded in Christian love and compassion, form the bedrock of an inclusive and spiritually nurturing learning environment. The emotional and spiritual impact of these connections extends beyond academic realms, influencing students' spiritual attitudes, motivations, and overall well-being.

Purpose

Given this revered backdrop, the purpose of this paper is twofold. Firstly, it seeks to comprehensively understand and illuminate how positive relationships between Christian educators and students impact not only academic success but also broader spiritual and intellectual development in higher education. Beyond conventional markers of success, the exploration delves into the manifold ways these connections contribute to a holistic and spiritually enriching educational experience. Secondly, it extends this exploration to the teachings encapsulated in the Holy Bible, the divine guidebook for Christian living. The Bible, a source of timeless spiritual wisdom, provides a profound lens through which the spiritual and ethical dimensions of educational relationships can be examined. The goal is not solely to offer practical insights for Christian educators but also to discern the spiritual and moral imperatives that underpin the relational tapestry of education.

Research Questions

Guided by the overarching purpose of unraveling the intricate tapestry of positive relationships in higher education through Christian principles and biblical insights, this study posits the following inquiries:

² Cathy McKay and Grace Macomber, "The Importance of Relationships in Education: Reflections of Current Educators," *Journal of Education* 203, no. 4 (October 2023): 751–58, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220574211057044>.

³ Michael D. Hammond, "Christian Higher Education in the United States: The Crisis of Evangelical Identity," *Christian Higher Education* 18, no. 1–2 (January 2019): 3–15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15363759.2018.1554352>.

⁴ Christian E. Waugh and Barbara L. Fredrickson, "Nice to Know You: Positive Emotions, Self–Other Overlap, and Complex Understanding in the Formation of a New Relationship," *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 1, no. 2 (April 2006): 93–106, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760500510569>.

Amidst the sacred covenant between educators and students, this research seeks to comprehensively understand and illuminate the impact of positive relationships grounded in Christian love and compassion. It delves beyond conventional markers of success, exploring the manifold ways in which these connections contribute to a holistic and spiritually enriching educational experience.

1. How do positive relationships, imbued with Christian principles, impact not only academic success but also the broader spiritual and intellectual development of students in higher education?

In aligning the sacred with the academic, this exploration extends beyond the material realm, probing into the spiritual and ethical dimensions of educational relationships. Grounded in the belief that the Holy Bible serves as a divine guidebook, the study seeks to draw parallels between its enduring teachings of wisdom, love, and compassion and the relational principles in the educational context.

2. In what ways can parallels be drawn between the principles of relationship building in education and the enduring teachings of wisdom, love, and compassion found in the Holy Bible?

This paper argues that integrating key biblical principles with contemporary educational practices not only provides a moral and ethical foundation for teaching but also offers practical strategies that can improve student engagement, learning outcomes, and overall educational effectiveness. By examining the alignment between biblical teachings and educational theories, this study aims to develop a comprehensive model that guides educators in fostering a holistic and values-driven learning environment.

The exploration begins with an overview of significant biblical principles relevant to education, followed by a detailed theological discussion of how these principles intersect with modern educational theories. The paper then synthesizes these insights to propose a practical model for educators that bridges the gap between biblical wisdom and contemporary pedagogical approaches.

Embarking on this sacred exploration necessitates a multifaceted approach. The vast seas of educational literature will be navigated, exploring empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, and pedagogical practices that align with Christian principles. Simultaneously, a parallel exploration of biblical passages will be undertaken, seeking divine insights that resonate with and illuminate the principles of positive relationship building. By weaving together these sacred strands, this paper aspires to contribute to a more profound understanding of the interconnectedness of education, spirituality, and the transformative impact of positive relationships in higher education from a Christian perspective.

Literature Review

Education, as a sacred endeavor intertwining the intellectual with the spiritual, finds its essence in the relational dynamics between educators and students. This section comprehensively reviews existing literature, navigating through empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, and pedagogical practices that shed light on the multifaceted role of positive relationships in higher education. Grounded in Christian principles and biblical insights, the review explores the

profound impact of these relationships on academic outcomes, spiritual growth, and the holistic development of students.

Fostering Trust in Education

Trust within the educational realm stands as a cornerstone for creating an environment conducive to academic engagement and spiritual flourishing.

Trust in Academic Engagement

Research illuminates the intricate relationship between trust in the student-teacher dynamic and the depth of academic engagement.⁵ Trust, in this context, extends beyond a mere transactional foundation; it becomes the bedrock upon which meaningful educational interactions thrive. The empirical evidence underscores the pivotal role of trust in shaping not only academic success but also the active participation of students in the educational journey. As students feel a sense of trust in their educators, they are more likely to engage deeply with the subject matter, ask questions, and contribute to a vibrant learning community.

Furthermore, studies supplement this understanding by revealing that trust is not static;⁶ it evolves over time with consistent positive interactions. The ongoing cultivation of trust becomes a dynamic process, crucial for fostering a supportive and engaging academic environment. These insights collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of trust in educational settings and its direct correlation with the vibrancy of academic engagement.

Nuanced Facets of Trust

Exploring the intricate dimensions of trust within the educational realm reveals a multifaceted construct that goes beyond mere reliability. Trust encompasses various aspects, including reliability, competence, and interpersonal understanding.⁷ This comprehensive view of trust is not limited to specific research findings but is a collective understanding derived from various studies and observations.

Within this broader perspective, trust becomes a complex amalgamation of factors that influence the dynamics between students and educators. It involves not only relying on the accuracy of information but also placing confidence in the competence and understanding of each other. Furthermore, the role of interpersonal trust is crucial in shaping a safe and supportive learning environment.⁸ In this broader exploration, trust is not merely a transactional element

⁵ Carmen M. Amerstorfer and Clara Freiin von Münster-Kistner, "Student Perceptions of Academic Engagement and Student-Teacher Relationships in Problem-Based Learning," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (October 2021): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.713057>.

⁶ Ying Li, Hongduo Cao, and Ying Zhang, "Static and Dynamic Structure Characteristics of a Trust Network and Formation of User Trust in an Online Society," *Social Networking* 07, no. 04 (2018): 197–219, <https://doi.org/10.4236/sn.2018.74016>.

⁷ Karin S. Hendricks et al., "Fostering Trust in Music Classrooms: A Review of the Literature," *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* (June 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1177/87551233231183366>.

⁸ Frédérique Six and Arndt Sorge, "Creating a High-Trust Organization: An Exploration into Organizational Policies That Stimulate Interpersonal Trust Building," *Journal of Management Studies* 45, no. 5 (July 28, 2008): 857–84, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2007.00763.x>.

but extends into the emotional and psychological dimensions of education.⁹ When students perceive educators as trustworthy, they are more likely to engage actively, express themselves freely, and contribute to the collaborative learning community.

Fostering Trust: Biblical Perspectives

Biblical principles of trust and faithfulness offer a timeless framework that resonates within the context of positive relationships, providing a spiritual foundation for the educational journey.

Exemplars of Trust in Scripture

Scriptural narratives, such as the story of Joseph in the Old Testament, exemplify unwavering trust in the face of adversity.¹⁰ Joseph's commitment to his principles and faithfulness to God's guidance underscores the transformative power of trust in navigating challenges. In the biblical account, Joseph's trust is not only directed towards God but is also manifested in his interactions with others. His trustworthiness in Potiphar's house and later in the role of a high-ranking official in Egypt showcases the ripple effects of trust in building meaningful relationships.

Furthermore, the narrative of Daniel in the lion's den (Daniel 6:22, NIV) serves as another poignant example of trust in the biblical context. Daniel's unwavering trust in God's protection, even in the face of imminent danger, stands as a testament to the profound impact of trust on one's character and resilience.

Theological Imperative of Trust

Additionally, the biblical injunction to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31, NIV) reinforces the interconnectedness of trust and love within the educational space. Trust, viewed through a theological lens, becomes an imperative linked to the broader Christian ethic of love and compassion. Theological insights, as expounded in biblical teachings, posit that trust is not only a practical necessity¹¹ but also a manifestation of Christian love. As educators embody trust in their interactions with students, they emulate the divine love and faithfulness espoused in Christian theology.

Moreover, the Apostle Paul's writings emphasize the transformative power of trust within the community. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul asserts that love "always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1 Corinthians 13:7, NIV). This theological perspective reinforces the enduring nature of trust and its symbiotic relationship with Christian virtues of love and hope.

Theoretical Synthesis: Relational Trust in Education and Biblical Virtues

⁹ Małgorzata Dzimińska, Justyna Fijałkowska, and Łukasz Sułkowski, "Trust-Based Quality Culture Conceptual Model for Higher Education Institutions," *Sustainability* 10, no. 8 (July 2018): 2599, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10082599>.

¹⁰ Chul Hyun and Paul Kim, "Reading the Joseph Story (Genesis 37-50) as a Diaspora Narrative," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (2013): 219–38, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43728173>.

¹¹ Evan Simpson, "Reasonable Trust," *European Journal of Philosophy* 21, no. 3 (September 17, 2013): 402–23, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0378.2011.00453.x>.

Synthesizing educational and biblical perspectives, the theoretical framework of relational trust in education¹² aligns with biblical notions of trust. This theoretical synthesis lays the groundwork for understanding the profound implications of trust within positive relationships in higher education.

The relational trust framework posited by Edwards-Groves and Grootenboer¹³ encompasses five critical dimensions: interpersonal, interactional, intersubjective, intellectual, and pragmatic. These components find resonance in biblical teachings, where trust is intertwined with virtues of wisdom, integrity, and love. The intellectual dimension of trust aligns with the biblical emphasis on wisdom and discernment (Proverbs 3:5-6, NIV). The call for intersubjectivity in the framework corresponds with biblical injunctions towards truthfulness and integrity (Ephesians 4:25, NIV). Lastly, the interpersonal component echoes the Christian ethic of love and compassion, reflecting the call to love your neighbor as yourself.¹⁴

Enhanced Communication

Effective communication within the educational realm is pivotal for cultivating positive relationships, fostering an environment conducive to academic excellence and spiritual growth.

Effective Communication in Education

The dynamics of effective communication within the student-teacher relationship are essential to building and sustaining positive connections. Duta and his colleagues conducted an insightful study exploring the intricacies of effective communication in education.¹⁵ Their research delves into both verbal and non-verbal aspects, highlighting the significance of active listening and empathetic understanding.

The findings underscore that effective communication is not a unidirectional flow of information but a reciprocal exchange that builds bridges of understanding between educators and students. By examining the nuances of verbal and non-verbal cues, educators can enhance their ability to convey information, respond to student needs, and create an inclusive learning environment. Moreover, effective communication plays a crucial role in fostering a sense of belonging and engagement, contributing to students' overall academic success.

In the contemporary educational landscape, digital communication platforms have become integral to the student-teacher dynamic. HersHKovitz and Baruch¹⁶ explore the impact of online communication on student-teacher relationships. Their study recognizes the evolving

¹² Christine Edwards-Groves and Peter Grootenboer, "Conceptualising Five Dimensions of Relational Trust: Implications for Middle Leadership," *School Leadership & Management* 41, no. 3 (May 2021): 260–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2021.1915761>.

¹³ Edwards-Groves and Grootenboer, "Conceptualising Five Dimensions of Relational Trust".

¹⁴ Chalmers, "Rethinking Luke 10: The Parable of the Good Samaritan Israelite," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 139, no. 3 (2020): 543, <https://doi.org/10.15699/jbl.1393.2020.6>.

¹⁵ Nicoleta Duta, Georgeta Panisoara, and Ion-Ovidiu Panisoara, "The Effective Communication in Teaching. Diagnostic Study Regarding the Academic Learning Motivation to Students," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 186 (May 2015): 1007–12, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.04.064>.

¹⁶ Arnon HersHKovitz and Alona Forkosh Baruch, "Student-Teacher Relationship in the Facebook Era: The Student Perspective," *International Journal of Continuing Engineering Education and Life-Long Learning* 23, no. 1 (2013): 33, <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJCEELL.2013.051765>.

nature of education in the digital age and investigates the challenges and opportunities presented by virtual interactions. As technology continues to shape the educational experience, understanding the nuances of effective digital communication is essential for maintaining positive relationships and facilitating meaningful interactions between educators and students.

Biblical Guidance on Positive Speech

Biblical principles offer timeless guidance on the power of speech and positive communication within the context of education. Proverbs 16:24 (NIV) encapsulates this wisdom: "Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones." This biblical injunction emphasizes the transformative impact of positive speech,¹⁷ highlighting its potential to nurture the spirit and promote healing within the educational context.

The teachings of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels, underscore the ethical dimension of communication. The call to "let your light shine before others" (Matthew 5:16, NIV) resonates with the idea that positive communication is not only a tool for academic instruction but also a beacon of moral guidance.¹⁸ Educators, through their words, have the capacity to inspire, uplift, and impart values that contribute to the spiritual and ethical development of students.

As we delve into the exploration of enhanced communication within the educational space, these dual lenses, empirical insights and biblical principles, converge to offer a holistic understanding of the transformative power of positive communication in fostering relationships within higher education. The synthesis of effective communication strategies and biblical guidance provides a nuanced framework for educators to cultivate positive, meaningful connections that extend beyond the classroom and contribute to the holistic development of students.

Personalized Learning

Personalized learning within the educational landscape is a transformative approach that recognizes the individuality of each student, tailoring educational experiences to meet unique needs¹⁹ and foster positive relationships. As we explore this paradigm, it becomes evident that personalized learning extends beyond conventional instructional methods. It embodies a commitment to understanding and addressing the diverse strengths, challenges, and learning styles present within the student body. This section delves into the efficacy of individualized approaches in education, and the impact of tailoring instructional methods to accommodate the diverse needs of students.

Individualized Approaches in Education

¹⁷ Mikhail Epstein, "Paradoxical Speech Acts: Transformatives and Counterformatives," *Parallax* 21, no. 2 (April 2015): 134–42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2015.1022366>.

¹⁸ Vincent R. Waldron et al., "How Parents Communicate Right and Wrong: A Study of Memorable Moral Messages Recalled by Emerging Adults," *Journal of Family Communication* 14, no. 4 (October 2014): 374–97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15267431.2014.946032>.

¹⁹ Danielle J. Camacho and Jill M. Legare, "Shifting Gears in the Classroom—Movement toward Personalized Learning and Competency-based Education," *The Journal of Competency-Based Education* 1, no. 4 (December 2016): 151–56, <https://doi.org/10.1002/cbe2.1032>.

Parson's research provides valuable insights into the efficacy of individualized approaches in education, emphasizing the importance of adapting instructional methods to suit the unique characteristics of each student.²⁰ The study explores how personalized learning environments can accommodate varying paces of learning, diverse backgrounds, and individual preferences. By tailoring educational experiences to the specific needs of students, educators can create a learning environment that fosters engagement, supports academic success, and nurtures the holistic development of each learner.

Walkington²¹ contributes to this exploration by investigating the role of adaptive learning technologies in personalized education. The study assesses the effectiveness of technology in providing personalized content and adapting to students' unique learning trajectories. The integration of technology into personalized learning not only enhances the scalability of individualized approaches but also opens new avenues for tailoring educational experiences to the diverse needs of a modern student body.

Biblical Support for Considering Others' Needs

In tandem with these empirical insights, biblical principles offer a foundational framework for considering the needs of others,²² aligning with the ethos of personalized learning. Philippians 2:4 (NIV) encapsulates this biblical imperative: "not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." This biblical injunction emphasizes the Christian virtue of selflessness and the importance of considering the needs and individual circumstances of others.

The teachings of Jesus further reinforce the value of recognizing and addressing individual needs.²³ In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37, NIV), Jesus exemplifies compassion and the willingness to go beyond conventional norms to meet the specific needs of an individual in distress. This biblical narrative serves as a profound illustration of the transformative impact of personalized care and consideration for others.

As educators navigate the landscape of personalized learning, the integration of biblical principles provides a moral compass. The biblical call to consider the needs of others aligns with the ethos of personalized learning, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and accommodating the unique requirements of each student. This synthesis of educational research and biblical insights contributes to a comprehensive understanding of personalized learning as a relational strategy that honors the individuality of each student within the higher education setting.

²⁰ Seth A. Parsons et al., "Teachers' Instructional Adaptations: A Research Synthesis," *Review of Educational Research* 88, no. 2 (April 2018): 205–42, <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654317743198>.

²¹ Candace A. Walkington, "Using Adaptive Learning Technologies to Personalize Instruction to Student Interests: The Impact of Relevant Contexts on Performance and Learning Outcomes.," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 105, no. 4 (November 2013): 932–45, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031882>.

²² Myrna Colon, "A Biblical Framework for Service Learning," *The Journal of Biblical Foundations of Faith and Learning* 2, no. 1 (2017): 17.

²³ Noah Anburaj Balraj, "Foundational Elements of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Jesus Christ's Teachings of Human Need Management," *Catalyst* 15, no. 1 (2017): 77–87.

Motivation and Engagement

Motivation and engagement stand as pillars within the educational landscape, shaping the trajectory of student success and spiritual development. This section explores motivational strategies in education, examining how educators can inspire and sustain student engagement. Additionally, we delve into biblical teachings that connect academic efforts to higher purposes, providing a spiritual perspective on the intrinsic motivation that stems from aligning one's educational journey with a broader sense of purpose.

Motivational Strategies in Education

Motivation is a driving force behind academic success, and educators play a crucial role in fostering and sustaining students' motivation. Research by Ryan and Deci²⁴ delves into the dynamics of motivation within the educational context, emphasizing the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The study underscores that students are more likely to be motivated when they feel a sense of autonomy in their learning, perceive themselves as competent in their academic pursuits, and experience a sense of connection with their peers and educators.

Furthermore, the work of Walker²⁵ explores the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational strategies on student engagement. The study investigates how aligning learning objectives with students' personal interests and goals enhances intrinsic motivation. Additionally, the research sheds light on the role of extrinsic motivators, such as positive reinforcement and recognition, in bolstering student engagement.

Connecting Academic Efforts to Higher Purposes in the Bible

Biblical teachings provide a profound framework for connecting academic efforts to higher purposes. Colossians 3:23 (NIV) imparts a timeless principle: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." This biblical injunction encourages individuals to approach their endeavors, including academics, with a sense of purpose and dedication. By viewing academic efforts as a form of service²⁶ to a higher calling, students can find intrinsic motivation rooted in a spiritual perspective.

The biblical narrative of Daniel serves as an exemplar of connecting academic pursuits to a higher purpose.²⁷ Daniel's commitment to excellence in learning and wisdom (Daniel 1:17-20,

²⁴ Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, "Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation from a Self-Determination Theory Perspective: Definitions, Theory, Practices, and Future Directions," *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 61 (April 2020): 101860, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020.101860>.

²⁵ Christopher O. Walker, Barbara A. Greene, and Robert A. Mansell, "Identification with Academics, Intrinsic/Extrinsic Motivation, and Self-Efficacy as Predictors of Cognitive Engagement," *Learning and Individual Differences* 16, no. 1 (January 2006): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2005.06.004>.

²⁶ Heather L. Pfeifer, "How to Be a Good Academic Citizen: The Role and Importance of Service in Academia," *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* 27, no. 2 (April 2016): 238–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511253.2015.1128706>.

²⁷ Peniel C. D. Maiaweng, "Understanding of Wisdom in the Book of Daniel," *Jurnal Jaffray* 14, no. 1 (2016): 93–108, <http://www.auss.info/>.

NIV) positioned him for divine favor and influence. This narrative underscores the transformative power of aligning academic endeavors with a sense of calling²⁸ and purpose, illustrating that academic excellence can be a form of worship.²⁹

As educators seek to motivate and engage students, the integration of motivational strategies in education and biblical principles provides a holistic approach. By fostering autonomy, competence, and relatedness, educators can enhance students' intrinsic motivation. Simultaneously, connecting academic efforts to higher purposes aligns with biblical teachings, offering a spiritual perspective that transcends the immediate educational context and contributes to the development of students as purpose-driven individuals.

Creating a Supportive Environment

The creation of a supportive educational environment is fundamental to fostering positive relationships, academic success, and spiritual growth. In this section, we explore the strategies employed in building a supportive educational community and examine biblical encouragement that emphasizes the communal aspect of sharing burdens.

Building a Supportive Educational Community

Research by Sanford and Munford³⁰ delves into the dynamics of building a supportive educational community. The study emphasizes the significance of fostering a sense of belonging and community among students. Creating opportunities for collaborative learning, peer support, and mentorship contributes to the establishment of a supportive educational environment.

Furthermore, the work of Anderson and Carta-falsa³¹ explores the impact of faculty-student relationships on the overall educational experience. The study highlights the role of positive interactions between educators and students in creating a supportive environment. When students feel seen, heard, and valued by their educators, they are more likely to thrive academically and experience a sense of belonging within the educational community.

Biblical Encouragement to Share Burdens

Biblical principles offer profound insights into the communal aspect of sharing burdens. Galatians 6:2 (NIV) advocates for mutual support: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ." This biblical injunction underscores the importance of empathy, compassion, and shared responsibility within a community. Translating this principle into the educational context, educators and students alike are encouraged to share the burdens of academic challenges, personal struggles, and the pursuit of knowledge.

²⁸ Shoshana R. Dobrow et al., "Calling and the Good Life: A Meta-Analysis and Theoretical Extension," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (June 2023): 508–50, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00018392231159641>.

²⁹ John Sullivan, "Worship and Learning," in *The Christian Academic in Higher Education* (Cham: Springer International Publishing (2018): 143–66, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-69629-4_6.

³⁰ Jackie Sanders and Robyn Munford, "Fostering a Sense of Belonging at School—Five Orientations to Practice That Assist Vulnerable Youth to Create a Positive Student Identity," *School Psychology International* 37, no. 2 (April 2016): 155–71, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034315614688>.

³¹ Lynne E. Anderson and John Carta-falsa, "Factors That Make Faculty and Student Relationships Effective," *College Teaching* 50, no. 4 (October 2002): 134–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/87567550209595894>.

Moreover, the biblical narrative of the early Christian community in Acts 2:42-47 (NIV) exemplifies the power of a supportive community.³² The believers shared not only in spiritual matters but also in practical concerns, ensuring that no one among them was in need. This biblical model of community³³ provides a compelling example for educators to cultivate an environment where students feel supported not only academically but also in their broader life challenges.

As educators strive to create a supportive educational environment, the integration of research on building a supportive community and biblical principles of shared burdens offers a comprehensive approach. By fostering a sense of belonging, encouraging positive interactions, and embodying the biblical ethos of shared responsibility, educators contribute to the creation of a supportive environment that nurtures the holistic development of students.

Positive Classroom Culture

Cultivating a positive classroom culture is pivotal for creating an environment conducive to learning, fostering relationships, and facilitating holistic student growth. In this section, we explore the profound impact of positive culture on learning within the educational setting and delve into biblical principles that underscore the importance of order and decency.

The Impact of Positive Culture on Learning

A positive classroom culture, steeped in respect, collaboration, and a genuine enthusiasm for learning, serves as a transformative force within the educational landscape.³⁴ When students find themselves enveloped in an atmosphere of belonging and mutual regard, the ripple effects on their engagement and academic outcomes are profound.

In such a positive environment, students not only absorb course materials but actively seek opportunities to contribute to discussions, share insights, and support their peers in their academic pursuits.³⁵ The collaborative spirit nurtured within this culture extends beyond the confines of individual achievement, fostering a sense of collective growth and shared success.

Moreover, the impact of a positive culture on student motivation cannot be overstated. The sense of community and respect cultivated within the classroom provides a fertile ground for the flourishing of intrinsic motivation.³⁶ As students sense their educators' commitment to their well-being and growth, they are naturally propelled to excel not merely for external validation but for the sheer joy and fulfillment of learning.

³² M. A. CO, "The Major Summaries in Acts: Acts 2,42-47; 4,32-35; 5,12-16," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 68, no. 1 (April 1992): 49–85, <https://doi.org/10.2143/ETL.68.1.542163>.

³³ Samuel Stroope, "How Culture Shapes Community: Bible Belief, Theological Unity, and a Sense of Belonging in Religious Congregations," *The Sociological Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (September 2011): 568–92, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2011.01220.x>.

³⁴ Elizabeth Bondy et al., "Creating Environments of Success and Resilience," *Urban Education* 42, no. 4 (July 2007): 326–48, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085907303406>.

³⁵ David J. Shernoff, *Optimal Learning Environments to Promote Student Engagement*, Advancing Responsible Adolescent Development (New York, NY: Springer New York, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-7089-2>.

³⁶ Vincenza Capone, Anna Rosa Donizzetti, and Giovanna Petrillo, "Classroom Relationships, Sense of Community, Perceptions of Justice, and Collective Efficacy for Students' Social Well-being," *Journal of Community Psychology* 46, no. 3 (April 2018): 374–82, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.21943>.

Additionally, the positive culture acts as a catalyst for the development of key life skills. Students, immersed in an environment that values cooperation and mutual support, hone their interpersonal and communication skills.³⁷ These skills, integral to success in both academic and real-world scenarios, are nurtured organically within the framework of a positive classroom culture.

As we delve into the impact of positive culture on learning, it becomes evident that it transcends the immediate academic context. It lays the groundwork for a holistic educational experience; one where students not only absorb knowledge but also internalize the values of collaboration, respect, and a genuine passion for lifelong learning. In this symbiotic relationship between positive culture and learning, students are not mere recipients of information; they are active participants in a transformative journey of intellectual and personal growth.

Biblical Emphasis on Order and Decency

Biblical principles offer timeless guidance on maintaining order and decency within the community, extending to the educational context. The Scriptures emphasize the importance of conducting all activities, including learning, in a fitting and orderly way (1 Corinthians 14:40, NIV). This biblical injunction encourages educators to establish a positive classroom culture³⁸ that reflects the values of orderliness and respect.

Additionally, the biblical concept of the "fruit of the Spirit" as outlined in Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV) includes virtues such as kindness, goodness, and self-control. These qualities align with the attributes of a positive classroom culture, where both educators and students exhibit kindness, goodness, and self-discipline. By embodying these biblical virtues, educators contribute to the creation of a classroom culture that reflects higher principles and fosters an environment conducive to learning and spiritual development.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of human interaction, and its management within educational settings is crucial for maintaining positive relationships and fostering a conducive learning environment. In this section, we explore strategies for resolving conflicts in educational settings and examine biblical guidance on addressing disputes privately.

Resolving Conflicts in Educational Settings

Conflict resolution in educational settings is a nuanced process that requires sensitivity, communication, and a commitment to preserving the well-being of all parties involved. Educators play a pivotal role in creating an environment where conflicts can be addressed constructively.

³⁷ Nicola Davis et al., *Learning Skills for Nursing Students*, Learning Skills for Nursing Students (London, UK: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2011), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526435750>.

³⁸ Brenda M. Morton, "Trauma-Informed School Practices: Creating Positive Classroom Culture," *Middle School Journal* 53, no. 4 (August 2022): 20–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00940771.2022.2096817>.

Research by Kapusuzoglu³⁹ delves into effective strategies for conflict resolution in educational settings. The study emphasizes the importance of open communication, active listening, and a collaborative approach to finding resolutions. By fostering an atmosphere where students feel heard and respected, educators contribute to the creation of a culture where conflicts can be transformed into opportunities for growth and understanding.

Moreover, the work of Lodi⁴⁰ explores the impact of restorative justice practices on conflict resolution in educational contexts. The study investigates how restorative justice principles, such as accountability and community-building, can be integrated into conflict resolution processes. This approach emphasizes not only addressing immediate issues but also restoring relationships and preventing future conflicts.

Biblical Guidance on Addressing Disputes Privately

Biblical principles provide a timeless foundation for addressing disputes, advocating for a private and reconciliatory approach. Matthew 18:15-17 (NIV) offers guidance on resolving conflicts within the community: "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over." This biblical injunction underscores the importance of addressing conflicts privately, promoting open communication and reconciliation.

The biblical model of addressing disputes privately aligns with the principle of seeking understanding before escalation.⁴¹ It emphasizes the preservation of relationships and the restoration of harmony within the educational community. By encouraging individuals to address conflicts privately, educators can contribute to the creation of a culture where disputes are opportunities for growth and reconciliation rather than sources of division.

As educators navigate the complexities of conflict resolution, the integration of research on effective strategies and biblical principles provides a comprehensive approach. By fostering open communication, active listening, and a commitment to addressing conflicts privately, educators contribute to the creation of an educational environment where conflicts are navigated with wisdom, empathy, and a focus on the well-being of all involved parties.

Understanding Diverse Perspectives

The recognition and appreciation of diverse perspectives are integral to creating an inclusive educational environment. In this section, we explore the promotion of diversity and inclusion in education and examine biblical principles that advocate for the acceptance of different perspectives.

Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Education

³⁹ Saduman Kapusuzoglu, "An Investigation of Conflict Resolution in Educational Organizations," *African Journal of Business Management* 4, no. 1 (2010): 96–102, <http://www.academicjournals.org/AJBM>.

⁴⁰ Ernesto Lodi et al., "Use of Restorative Justice and Restorative Practices at School: A Systematic Literature Review," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 19, no. 1 (December 2021): 96, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19010096>.

⁴¹ Onne Janssen and Evert van de Vliert, "Concern for the Other's Goals: Key to (De-)Escalation of Conflict," *International Journal of Conflict Management* 7, no. 2 (February 1996): 99–120, <https://doi.org/10.1108/eb022777>.

Promoting diversity and inclusion in education is a multifaceted commitment that extends beyond demographic representation to fostering an environment where diverse perspectives are valued and integrated into the learning experience.⁴²

Inclusive pedagogical practices recognize the richness that diverse perspectives bring to the educational landscape. These practices involve incorporating diverse authors, narratives, and cultural contexts into the curriculum. By doing so, educators create a learning environment that not only reflects the diversity of the world but also provides students with a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.⁴³

Moreover, research indicates that inclusive classroom environments positively impact student engagement and academic success. Students thrive academically when they see themselves and their experiences reflected in the educational materials. An inclusive approach not only fosters a sense of belonging but also prepares students to navigate a diverse and interconnected global society.⁴⁴

Biblical Acceptance of Different Perspectives

Biblical principles underscore the acceptance of different perspectives within the context of community and relationships. Romans 14:1-3 (NIV) emphasizes the importance of embracing diversity of beliefs and practices within the Christian community: "Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters... For God has accepted them." This biblical injunction encourages a spirit of acceptance and understanding, recognizing that individuals may hold different perspectives on matters of faith and practice.

The biblical narrative of Paul's missionary journeys further exemplifies an acceptance of diverse cultures and perspectives. As Paul engaged with diverse communities,⁴⁵ he adapted his approach to meet them where they were, respecting their cultural backgrounds and understanding their unique perspectives. This biblical model encourages educators to embrace a similar ethos, recognizing the value of diverse perspectives within the educational context.

As educators strive to understand diverse perspectives, the integration of inclusive pedagogical practices and biblical principles of acceptance provides a comprehensive framework. By promoting diversity and inclusion in education and embracing the biblical call to accept different perspectives, educators contribute to the creation of an educational environment that honors the unique experiences and perspectives of each student, fostering a culture of mutual respect and understanding.

⁴² Stephen Billett, "Integrating Learning Experiences across Tertiary Education and Practice Settings: A Socio-Personal Account," *Educational Research Review* 12 (June 2014): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2014.01.002>.

⁴³ Lani Florian, "Conceptualizing Inclusive Pedagogy: The Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action," *Emerald Group Publishing Limited* 7 (2015): 11–24, <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-363620150000007001>.

⁴⁴ Ella R. Kahu and Karen Nelson, "Student Engagement in the Educational Interface: Understanding the Mechanisms of Student Success," *Higher Education Research & Development* 37, no. 1 (January 2018): 58–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2017.1344197>.

⁴⁵ Amanda Avila Kaminski, "Conversion, Apostasy, or Hybridity? The Terrible, Troubled, Transformative Experience of Paul as Exemplar for Missiology in an Age of Multiplicity," *Missiology: An International Review* 50, no. 1 (January 2022): 91–104, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00918296211039567>.

Moral and Ethical Development

Moral and ethical development is foundational to the character formation⁴⁶ of individuals, influencing not only their academic pursuits but also shaping their values and contributions to society. In this section, we explore the integration of moral and ethical education and examine biblical principles that serve as a guide for moral development.

Integrating Moral and Ethical Education

The integration of moral and ethical education within the academic realm is a holistic approach that recognizes the interconnectedness of knowledge acquisition and character development.⁴⁷ It goes beyond the transmission of information to instill values such as empathy, responsibility, and compassion.

Educational practices that prioritize moral and ethical development⁴⁸ include the incorporation of ethical case studies, discussions on moral dilemmas, and service-learning opportunities. Research indicates that these methods not only contribute to students' moral growth but also enhance their academic engagement and overall well-being.

Moreover, creating a classroom culture that values ethical behavior and encourages open dialogue on moral issues fosters an environment where students can navigate complex ethical considerations.⁴⁹ This approach prepares them to make principled decisions in both academic and real-world scenarios.

Biblical Principles for Guiding Moral Development

Biblical principles serve as an enduring guide for moral development, offering timeless wisdom on ethical conduct and character formation. Proverbs 22:6 (NIV) imparts a foundational principle: "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it." This biblical injunction underscores the importance of early guidance in shaping moral character.

The teachings of Jesus, particularly the Sermon on the Mount, provide profound insights into moral and ethical living. Matthew 5:16 (NIV) encourages individuals to let their light shine before others, emphasizing the transformative impact of virtuous living on the broader community.

As educators embrace the responsibility of guiding moral and ethical development, the integration of research on effective educational practices and biblical principles provides a comprehensive framework. By fostering an environment that prioritizes moral and ethical education and drawing on the enduring wisdom of biblical teachings, educators contribute to the

⁴⁶ John C. Gibbs, "Moral Development, Moral Identity, and Prosocial Behavior," in *Moral Development and Reality* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 157–79, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190878214.003.0006>.

⁴⁷ Dominik Balg, "Moral Disagreement and Moral Education: What's the Problem?" *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 27 (June 2023): 5–24, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-023-10399-9>.

⁴⁸ Alan Harris, "Morality as a 'Subject,'" in *Teaching Morality and Religion* (Routledge, 2018), 30–36, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429030765-5>.

⁴⁹ Diana Bairaktarova and Anna Woodcock, "Engineering Student's Ethical Awareness and Behavior: A New Motivational Model," *Science and Engineering Ethics* 23, no. 4 (August 2017): 1129–57, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11948-016-9814-x>.

formation of individuals who not only excel academically but also embody moral virtues that guide their actions and decisions throughout life.

Holistic Well-Being

Holistic well-being is paramount in the educational journey, encompassing physical, mental, and emotional health. In this section, we explore the importance of holistic well-being in education and examine biblical principles that provide guidance for nurturing the complete well-being of individuals.

Prioritizing Holistic Well-Being in Education

The concept of holistic well-being recognizes that academic success is intertwined with physical health, mental resilience, and emotional balance.⁵⁰ Educators play a crucial role in creating an environment that prioritizes the holistic well-being of students.

Research indicates that practices such as mindfulness, physical activity, and mental health education contribute to the overall well-being of students. Integrating these practices into the educational curriculum fosters an environment where students can thrive not only academically⁵¹ but also in their personal and social lives.

Moreover, creating a culture of support and openness regarding mental health challenges reduces stigma and encourages students to seek help when needed.⁵² Educators who prioritize holistic well-being contribute to the development of resilient individuals capable of navigating the complexities of both academic and personal life.

Biblical Principles for Nurturing Well-Being

Biblical principles offer profound guidance for nurturing holistic well-being. Psalm 23:1-3 (NIV) speaks to the holistic care provided by the Divine Shepherd: "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul." This imagery emphasizes the importance of rest, sustenance, and spiritual refreshment for complete well-being.

The teachings of Jesus, particularly the emphasis on love and compassion, further underscore the holistic nature of well-being. Mark 12:30-31 (NIV) encapsulates this principle: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength... Love your neighbor as yourself." This holistic approach to love encompasses all aspects of human existence, promoting the well-being of both oneself and others.

As educators champion holistic well-being, the integration of research on effective well-being practices and biblical principles provides a comprehensive framework. By prioritizing practices that support physical, mental, and emotional health and drawing on the timeless wisdom of biblical teachings, educators contribute to the development of individuals who not

⁵⁰ Susanne B cker et al., "Subjective Well-Being and Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Research in Personality* 74 (June 2018): 83–94, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2018.02.007>.

⁵¹ Ricarda Steinmayr et al., "Subjective Well-Being, Test Anxiety, Academic Achievement: Testing for Reciprocal Effects," *Frontiers in Psychology* 6 (January 2016), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01994>.

⁵² Meekyung Han and Helen Pong, "Mental Health Help-Seeking Behaviors Among Asian American Community College Students: The Effect of Stigma, Cultural Barriers, and Acculturation," *Journal of College Student Development* 56, no. 1 (2015): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2015.0001>.

only excel academically but also experience a profound sense of well-being in all dimensions of their lives.

Long-Term Impact

Sustaining positive relationships is foundational to achieving a lasting impact in education.⁵³ In this section, we explore the importance of sustaining positive relationships for enduring influence and examine biblical encouragement to pass on knowledge and values.

Sustaining Positive Relationships for Lasting Impact

The significance of positive relationships in education extends beyond immediate academic success to the enduring impact on students' lives. Educators who invest in building and sustaining positive relationships with their students create a foundation for lifelong learning⁵⁴ and personal development.

Research indicates that positive teacher-student relationships contribute to students' academic motivation, engagement, and overall well-being.⁵⁵ When students feel valued, supported, and understood, they are more likely to persevere through challenges and embrace learning as a continuous journey.

Moreover, the mentorship aspect of positive relationships fosters a sense of guidance and support, influencing students' decision-making processes well beyond their time in formal education.⁵⁶ Educators who prioritize sustaining positive relationships contribute to the long-term success and fulfillment of their students.

Biblical Encouragement to Pass On Knowledge and Values

Biblical principles offer encouragement to pass on knowledge and values to future generations. Proverbs 22:6 (NIV) states, "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old, they will not turn from it." This biblical injunction emphasizes the lasting impact of imparting knowledge and instilling values in the younger generation.

The concept of discipleship, as exemplified in the biblical narratives of Jesus and his disciples,⁵⁷ underscores the importance of passing on not only knowledge but also values and principles. Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV) encapsulates this call to discipleship: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Educators who embrace the role of mentors contribute to the enduring legacy of knowledge and values.

⁵³ Terri J. Sabol and Robert C. Pianta, "Recent Trends in Research on Teacher-Child Relationships," *Attachment & Human Development* 14, no. 3 (May 2012): 213-31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616734.2012.672262>.

⁵⁴ John R. Kirby et al., "Development of a Scale to Measure Lifelong Learning," *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 29, no. 3 (May 2010): 291-302, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02601371003700584>.

⁵⁵ Wendy M. Reinke et al., "Supporting Children's Mental Health in Schools: Teacher Perceptions of Needs, Roles, and Barriers," *School Psychology Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (March 2011): 1-13, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022714>.

⁵⁶ Terese J. Lund et al., "Quality over Quantity? Mentoring Relationships and Purpose Development among College Students," *Psychology in the Schools* 56, no. 9 (November 2019): 1472-81, <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22284>.

⁵⁷ Opoku Onyinah, "The Meaning of Discipleship," *International Review of Mission* 106, no. 2 (December 2017): 216-27, <https://doi.org/10.1111/irrom.12181>.

As educators strive to create a long-term impact, the integration of research on sustaining positive relationships and biblical principles of passing on knowledge and values provides a comprehensive framework. By prioritizing the cultivation of positive relationships and drawing on the timeless wisdom of biblical teachings, educators contribute to the development of individuals who not only excel academically but also carry forward the knowledge and values imparted to them throughout their lives.

Literature Review Summary

The literature review explores the multifaceted role of positive relationships in higher education. It delves into the importance of trust, effective communication, personalized learning, motivation, a supportive environment, and conflict resolution in fostering a conducive learning environment. The review also examines biblical perspectives on these topics, offering a spiritual foundation for cultivating positive relationships and promoting holistic student development.

Key findings include trust's significance for academic engagement and spiritual growth, encompassing reliability, competence, and interpersonal understanding. Effective communication is crucial for building positive relationships, involving both verbal and non-verbal cues, and digital communication plays a significant role in the modern educational landscape. Tailoring educational experiences to individual needs can enhance engagement and academic success. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation strategies can inspire and sustain student engagement, and connecting academic efforts to higher purposes provides a spiritual perspective on motivation. Building a supportive educational community involves fostering belonging, positive interactions, and sharing burdens. Effective conflict resolution strategies include open communication, active listening, and restorative justice practices. Promoting diversity and inclusion in education involves recognizing and appreciating different perspectives. Integrating moral and ethical education can shape students' character and values. Prioritizing holistic well-being in education encompasses physical, mental, and emotional health.

The review concludes by highlighting the importance of creating a positive classroom culture, fostering understanding, and providing guidance for moral and ethical development. By integrating these elements, educators can contribute to the holistic development of students and create a supportive and engaging learning environment.

Methodology

Research Design

The process of literature discovery involved a rigorous search across reputable academic databases, including EBSCO, Google Scholar, and electronic databases from various university libraries. Rigor was utilized in the selection criteria for articles aimed at ensuring the inclusion of high-quality and relevant literature⁵⁸ in the synthesis.

Selection Criteria:

⁵⁸ I. M. Côté et al., "4. Gathering Data: Searching Literature and Selection Criteria," in *Handbook of Meta-Analysis in Ecology and Evolution* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013), 37–51, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400846184-006>.

Peer-Reviewed Journals and Scholarly Books: Articles were primarily sourced from peer-reviewed journals and scholarly texts to ensure a high standard of academic rigor and reliability.

Publication Date: The search prioritized relatively recent publications to incorporate the latest advancements and perspectives in relationship-building within higher education.

Relevance to Higher Education: Selected articles specifically focused on relationship-building within the higher education context, aligning with the scope of the study.

Empirical Studies and Theoretical Frameworks: Both empirical studies and articles presenting strong theoretical frameworks were included to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Diversity of Perspectives: The synthesis aimed to include a diverse range of perspectives, encompassing various educational settings, cultural contexts, and theoretical orientations.

Incorporation of Christian Perspective: Keywords related to the Christian approach, such as Christian education, spiritual mentorship, and biblical principles in academia, were included to ensure the exploration of literature that integrates spiritual and ethical dimensions of relationship-building in higher education.

The critical analysis of the literature involved evaluating the methodologies employed in the selected articles, examining the strength of evidence, and identifying any limitations or gaps. The aim was to provide a thorough and nuanced understanding of the current state of knowledge on relationship-building in higher education.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection process was exclusively based on the extraction of information from identified academic sources. The use of reputable databases and adherence to strict selection criteria ensured the inclusion of scholarly articles that met rigorous academic standards.

The thematic analysis focused on identifying recurring themes, theories, and effective strategies present in the selected literature. Rigorous attention was given to the depth and breadth of these themes, allowing for a comprehensive categorization, and understanding.

Qualitative Analysis of Identified Patterns

The qualitative analysis delved into the qualitative aspects⁵⁹ of the identified patterns, examining the practical implications and applications of the themes extracted from the literature. This qualitative examination aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the nuanced aspects of successful relationship-building in higher education.

By adhering to these rigorous selection criteria and employing a systematic approach to literature discovery and analysis, the methodology ensures a robust foundation for deriving meaningful insights and recommendations in the subsequent discussion of the paper.

Results

Overview of Findings

⁵⁹ Lisa Werkmeister Rozas and Waldo C. Klein, "The Value and Purpose of the Traditional Qualitative Literature Review," *Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work* 7, no. 5 (November 2010): 387–99, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15433710903344116>.

The synthesis of literature on relationship-building in higher education has unveiled a tapestry of insights that resonate with the core principles of academic success and the timeless wisdom found in biblical teachings. As we delve into the results, this section offers a comprehensive overview of key findings, emphasizing the positive correlation between relationship-building and academic success, as well as the alignment of educational principles with the ethical and spiritual guidance imparted by biblical teachings.

Positive Correlation between Relationship Building and Academic Success

The synthesis of literature revealed a consistent and robust positive correlation between relationship building and academic success within the higher education landscape. Numerous studies and scholarly articles consistently demonstrated that positive relationships between educators and students significantly impact academic outcomes. Strong, supportive relationships were found to be associated with increased student engagement, motivation, and overall satisfaction with the learning experience.

Notably, findings indicated that positive relationships contribute to a conducive learning environment, fostering open communication and trust. In turn, this conducive environment enhances students' academic performance by creating a space where they feel valued, supported, and encouraged to actively participate in their educational journey.

The identified correlation was not limited to academic achievement alone; it extended to holistic student development, emphasizing the importance of emotional well-being, resilience, and a sense of belonging in the educational context. These holistic aspects, influenced by positive relationships, contribute to a more comprehensive and enriching academic experience.

Alignment of Educational Principles with Biblical Teachings

Another notable finding is the alignment of educational principles with biblical teachings. The literature synthesis revealed that core principles underpinning effective relationship-building in higher education resonate with key biblical teachings. Concepts such as trust, compassion, empathy, and selfless love, central to successful relationships, mirror biblical virtues emphasized in scriptures.

Biblical teachings, particularly those related to mentorship, guidance, and fostering a supportive community, echoed in the effective practices identified in the literature. Educators who integrate these principles into their approach contribute not only to academic success but also to the moral and ethical development of students, aligning with the overarching goal of higher education.

The alignment between educational principles and biblical teachings serves as a foundation for a holistic and values-based educational experience. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of academic knowledge and moral development, nurturing individuals who not only excel academically but also embody virtues that contribute to their personal and societal well-being.

The overview of findings highlights a compelling connection between relationship-building and academic success, as well as the alignment of educational principles with biblical teachings. These findings form a solid basis for understanding the profound impact of positive

relationships in higher education and underscore the potential for integrating biblical values into educational practices for a more enriching and meaningful learning experience.

Discussion and Conclusion

Summary of Key Findings

The synthesis of literature stands as an intricate tapestry, weaving together profound insights into the intricate dance between educators and students within the realm of higher education. Two foundational findings emerge, each bearing profound significance.

Relationship Building as a Catalyst for Positive Outcomes

Our journey through academic literature consistently reveals the catalytic power of relationship building in higher education. Beyond the conventional notion of educator-student dynamics, these relationships emerge as transformative forces, acting as catalysts for positive outcomes. The synthesis echoes a resounding positive correlation between robust relationships and academic success, illustrating the far-reaching impact of these connections.

This positive correlation, nuanced and multifaceted, extends beyond the boundaries of traditional academic achievements. It permeates the educational experience, influencing students' emotional well-being, motivation, and overall satisfaction. The classroom, often seen as a crucible for intellectual growth, transforms into a fertile ground where trust, collaboration, and mutual respect flourish. The essence of relationship building becomes more than a pedagogical strategy—it evolves into a cornerstone that shapes the very essence of a thriving educational community.

Biblical Parallels Supporting the Importance of Relationships

In tandem with our exploration of academic literature, we uncover resonances with timeless wisdom found in biblical teachings. The principles of trust, compassion, and selfless love, identified as integral to effective relationship-building in higher education, echo the ethical and spiritual guidance imparted by biblical wisdom.

The synthesis underscores that the essence of positive relationships extends beyond disciplinary boundaries; it is rooted in universal virtues that transcend time and context. The alignment between foundational educational principles and biblical teachings reinforces the holistic nature of positive relationships. The synthesis paints a compelling picture of educators and students engaged in a transformative dance, where academic knowledge intertwines seamlessly with ethical and spiritual growth.

Implications for Higher Education

Transitioning from theoretical insights to actionable considerations, the implications for higher education beckon educators to rethink their practices within the evolving landscape. This section delves into the transformative potential of our discoveries, urging educators to embrace a paradigm shift in fostering positive relationships.

Practical Applications for Educators

The implications of our synthesis extend far beyond the theoretical realm, urging educators to reshape their practices within higher education. It calls for a paradigm shift—a move

from seeing education solely as an intellectual pursuit to recognizing it as a holistic journey. Practical applications for educators emerge as beacons guiding this transformative shift.

Fostering mentorship programs becomes not just a strategic move but a profound investment in the development of individuals. Collaborative learning initiatives cease to be mere educational strategies; they transform into crucibles for shared experiences, strengthening the bonds between educators and students. Open channels of communication evolve from administrative necessities to pathways for cultivating trust and understanding. These practical applications become the instruments through which educators can actively cultivate environments where positive relationships are valued, nurtured, and recognized as foundational to the educational mission.

Integration of Biblical Principles in Educational Practices

Building upon the identified alignment with biblical teachings, the synthesis extends an invitation to higher education institutions to consider a richer integration of ethical and spiritual dimensions into educational frameworks. The incorporation of biblical principles, such as love, compassion, and mentorship, transcends the conventional boundaries of pedagogy. It becomes a call to weave these principles into the very fabric of educational practices, creating an environment where academic pursuits coalesce seamlessly with the development of character and values.

The integration of biblical principles in educational practices is not a mere addition but a transformative endeavor. It envisions higher education as a space where the pursuit of knowledge is harmoniously intertwined with the cultivation of virtues, nurturing individuals who not only excel academically but also embody values that contribute to their personal and societal well-being.

Future Research Directions

Peer into the horizon of academic exploration as this synthesis sets the stage for future research directions. Beyond the current landscape, this section invites scholars to delve deeper into the intricate dynamics of relationship-building, presenting uncharted territories ripe for investigation.

Our synthesis paves the way for future research to embark on a nuanced exploration of specific relationship-building strategies within higher education. It beckons scholars to delve into the intricacies of mentorship programs, collaborative learning environments, and innovative communication approaches. This call for further exploration recognizes that the landscape of relationship-building is vast and diverse, offering rich opportunities for refining educational practices.

Understanding the nuances of specific relationship-building strategies contributes not only to the academic discourse but also provides actionable insights for educators. It is an invitation to unravel the layers of complexity surrounding these strategies, unveiling the subtle dynamics that shape positive relationships in higher education.

Longitudinal Studies on the Sustained Impact of Positive Relationships in Higher Education

Complementing the identified strategies, there is a pressing need for longitudinal studies that explore the sustained impact of positive relationships in higher education. As we navigate through our academic exploration, we catch glimpses of the profound influence of these relationships, not just during the academic journey but in the long-term trajectories of students after graduation.

Longitudinal studies become the lenses through which we can track the enduring effects of positive relationships on individuals as they navigate the complexities of life beyond the classroom. These studies offer a panoramic view of how the seeds planted within the educational context blossom into the values, attitudes, and choices that define individuals in their personal and professional spheres.

Final Thoughts

In these concluding reflections, the tapestry of our academic journey unfolds into final thoughts. This space transcends mere summary, extending an invitation to collectively reflect on the contributions, implications, and the profound call to action reverberating through the corridors of higher education.

In the final reflection on our academic journey, the synthesis of research contributions emerges as a collective endeavor that transcends the boundaries of individual disciplines. It is a mosaic woven from threads of academic findings, biblical wisdom, and the shared experiences of educators and students.

The synthesis is more than a culmination; it is a testament to the collaborative nature of knowledge-building. It underscores that our understanding of relationship-building in higher education is enriched not only by academic rigor but also by the diverse perspectives and lived experiences that each contributor brings to the discourse.

Call to Action for Educators to Prioritize Relationship Building in Higher Education Based on Biblical Principles

In our concluding thoughts, a resonant call to action echoes—a call directed to educators, administrators, and scholars. It is a call to prioritize relationship building in higher education, not merely as a pedagogical strategy but as a foundational principle deeply rooted in biblical wisdom.

This call to action is more than an exhortation; it is an acknowledgment of the profound impact educators can have on shaping not just the academic success of students but their character, values, and spiritual growth. It beckons educators to embrace relationship building as an integral aspect of their mission, cultivating environments where the pursuit of knowledge is intertwined with the cultivation of virtues.

In the tapestry of higher education, where academic rigor and ethical development converge, this call to action envisions a landscape where positive relationships serve as guiding stars, illuminating the path for educators and students alike. It is an invitation to not only recognize the transformative potential within relationships but to actively nurture and prioritize them, creating a legacy that transcends the confines of the classroom and resonates in the hearts and minds of individuals for a lifetime.

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