

Jurnal Sosiologi Agama

Jurnal Ilmiah Sosiologi Agama dan Perubahan Sosial

CULTURED PEOPLE IN THE MILLENNIAL ERA FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE AND THEIR RED THREADS IN THE THEOLOGICAL DOCUMENTS OF THE BATAK PROTESTANT CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Pintor Marihot Sitanggang

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi HKBP Pematangsiantar
pintorsitanggang76@gmail.com

Abstract

Humans will never be separated from their culture, and that is the basis for labeling cultured humans. Over time, the culture has developed, which has also been influenced by the times. It is not surprising that in the current millennial era, many values from culture have faded or even experienced a transformation of meaning because they have to be adapted to the millennial era. Of course, the study of theology, dogmatics, and practical ethics will not ignore the understanding of this reality. This article explains the Christian perspective on cultured humans in the millennial era. Using qualitative research methods, this article describes the Biblical basis of cultured humans from both the perspective of the Old Testament and the New Testament. This article develops Christian teachings on cultured humans in the context of the millennial era through the perspectives of theologians and then explains how the thread relates to the theological documents of the Huria Kristen Batak Protestant (HKBP) church in particular. Through this article, concrete contextualization from a Christian perspective on cultured humans in the millennial era will be broken down, especially in the pluralistic Indonesian context.

Keywords: Human; Culture; Millennial Era; Christian; Batak Christian Protestant Church

INTRODUCTION

Culture is a subject of ongoing study due to its intrinsic connection to the progression of time. In the contemporary millennial era, cultural developments are occurring at an accelerated pace. Indonesia is said to experience significant shifts as a result of the dynamics of this era, characterized by individuals born between 1980 and 1999 who have actively engaged in productive development. This generation emerged alongside advancements in information and communication technology (Suprayitno and Wahyudi 2020).

During the millennial era, technological innovations such as color projectors, Bluetooth-enabled remotes, mobile phones, and internet systems have become integral to everyday life. The influence of this era on cultural development is notable, affecting how individuals engage with and perceive culture.

Increased familiarity with technology across various aspects of daily life may lead to shifts in cultural engagement, enhancing cultural quality, or initiating changes within existing cultural frameworks.

Individuals in the millennial generation are youthful and productive, possessing strong intellectual capabilities and an aptitude for quickly absorbing and sharing the latest information. As time progresses, traditional culture is increasingly set aside in favor of options that are simpler, more affordable, and faster (Lumbantobing 2015). Engaging in virtual activities is becoming more commonplace, as those living in the millennial era are familiar with social media, although this ultimately leads to a decrease in face-to-face interactions in social relationships. It is not surprising that the global crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic was addressed through advancements in industrial technology typical of this millennial age. The rise of individualism within the millennial era is undeniable and is expected to intensify. The ideals of cooperation and community will likely be overshadowed by the ongoing progress of industrial technology prevalent in this generation (Lumbantobing 2015). With this context in mind, the researcher seeks to explore how Christianity can contribute its perspective in preserving cultural values amid millennial life.

The theological documents of the Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP) and Christianity represent crucial resources for examining the concept of "Cultural People" in the Millennium Era. They offer ethical, moral, and spiritual foundations that are pertinent to contemporary contexts. These documents assist both the church and its adherents in comprehending how Christian values may be integrated into daily life, particularly amidst evolving cultural dynamics. Generally, the theological documents of HKBP and Christianity encapsulate ethical and moral principles derived from biblical teachings. In this Millennium Era, characterized by prevalent tensions between cultural norms and religious doctrines, a robust understanding of these ethical foundations is essential for sustaining Christian integrity and identity. The documents guide Christians in making informed decisions across various scenarios, encompassing social interactions, technology usage, and societal participation.

Furthermore, these theological texts enable the church to discern how Christian values can be interpreted and effectively applied in diverse cultural settings. The rapid and dynamic changes characteristic of the Millennium Era necessitate such critical reflection on culture; this allows for the evaluation of practices in light of Christian principles and encourages congregations to engage actively in promoting a positive cultural environment. In an age marked by globalization and pluralism, Christians must possess a clear understanding of their identity as believers. The theological documents of HKBP and Christianity reinforce this identity by outlining the historical context, teachings, and practices of the church. This foundational knowledge is vital for Christians to cultivate constructive relationships with various groups without compromising their identity.

Additionally, these documents serve to empower individuals in addressing the multifaceted challenges of the Millennium Era. Through a comprehensive understanding of religious teachings, Christians are positioned to act as catalysts for positive change within society. They may participate in activities such as social services, education, and advocacy, all aimed at fostering a more equitable and prosperous community. The church can also leverage these theological documents in its counseling and coaching initiatives, providing individuals with support in navigating personal and social issues that emerged in the Millennium Era. These documents afford spiritual and moral perspectives that can assist individuals in mitigating stress, anxiety, and numerous other challenges.

In summary, the theological documents of the Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP) and Christianity play a pivotal role in the framework of "Cultivated People" in the Millennium Era. These texts serve not only as theological foundations but also as practical guides for living faithfully and purposefully as cultured Christians.

In this article, the author employs a qualitative research method, focusing on an in-depth library analysis that reveals rich insights into the topic at hand. This descriptive approach is heavily reliant on the author's interpretation and examination of various literary sources. The research is grounded in a selection of key literature, including both books and scholarly articles relevant to the themes outlined in the abstract.

Diving into the realm of Christian theology, the author meticulously explores a range of theological literature, from biblical texts to the profound thoughts of notable Christian theologians. A significant portion of the discussion is centered around essential theological documents from the Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP). Among these pivotal sources are the HKBP Ruhut Parmahanion dohot Paminsangon (RPP), the HKBP Confession Book, and the HKBP Ende Book, all of which provide a rich foundation for the exploration and analysis presented in this work. This thoughtful engagement with existing literature not only enhances the dialogue but also contributes to a deeper understanding of the theological framework within which the HKBP operates.

Literature Review

Literature Review contains the general comments on existing studies, the trend of the literature used in the formal and material objects or concepts developed, critique of existing studies, what is forgotten, shortcomings of previous studies, and write using the concept of Zooming (From the development of international definitions/forms/concepts to the context of the study/issue raised).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Biblical Foundations: Cultured People

The Bible is a part that can never be separated from a study that talks about a Christian perspective. Likewise, if we talk about cultured humans, it will undoubtedly be a friendly matter in the contents of the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, because, in essence, the historical content of the Bible contains the cultural system, the attitudes of cultured humans, and how Jesus himself views culture. The Old Testament and the New Testament complement each other, as the New Testament fulfills the prophetic traditions found in the Old Testament. When approached through systematic teaching, it becomes clear that human culture is not simply a matter of right and wrong; instead, it revolves around what is most appropriate according to Christian teachings. A foundational aspect of the Bible is that it contains the Word of God, who is not only present at the time of creation but continues to live and work in the current era (Niftrik 1981). However, a key issue to explore is whether contemporary culture still believes in the Word. For people to grow in faith, they must reach a position of trust that allows them to hear and obey what God communicates through His Word.

Cultured People in the Old Testament

Concretely, the Bible does not mention the word "culture" or civilized, but based on biblical studies, culture can be based on human duties in the world. The duties that refer to culture are contained in Genesis 2:15, where being cultured means cultivating, caring for, and nurturing. However, before that, based on Genesis 1:28, it is explained that "man bears the image of a creator" because, in essence, humans are in the image and likeness of God. So, based on this appearance, humans also have the right to conquer other creations. The Old Testament, as a whole, directs culture towards things that are constructive and not disruptive, nurturing and not killing, giving life, and not exploiting according to personal desires. Psalm 150 bases culture on a focus on God's love and glory so that even towards others who are cultural partners in the world, love can always be present and real. Judges 2:7-19 describes how a culture can

change as generations pass through life. Their powerlessness increasingly erodes the commitment of the older generation of Israelites to maintain that culture. Acceptance of a new culture that does not follow the teachings of Christian doctrine results in the erosion of the spiritual identity that exists in each person's soul. Good culture is then defined as a position that does not focus on renewal but instead on faith so that the Holy Spirit can make every Christian a liberator in the lives of others.

In the story of the Israelites, culture consists of repeated actions that people follow as laws. These laws often come from priests, prophets, and God (Hill and Walton 2013). A cultured person is someone who lives by the rules and norms of their community. Each region has its own culture, so the Bible does not demand that all cultures be the same. Instead, the Bible emphasizes bringing cultures under the guidance of God's Word. One prominent aspect of Old Testament culture is patriarchy, which gives men a dominant role in society, affecting family life, religion, and education. Typically, this system places women in a subordinate position, making it rare for them to hold leadership roles or power. In his address to Israelite leaders, Joshua urged them to uphold the Torah and continue living according to God's commands, reminding them of their liberation from Egypt (Joshua 23). Therefore, a cultured person will be more discerning when it comes to adopting aspects of other cultures that may not be appropriate.

Cultured People in the New Testament

The role of Jesus Christ in the New Testament introduces a fresh cultural dimension to Biblical existence. Numerous cultures had to be reshaped through the teachings refreshed by Jesus, along with the emergence of several new cultures. Even in contemporary times, the culture of early Christianity has been retained and has also evolved over the years. The traditions surrounding the celebration of Jesus Christ's birth, the observance of his crucifixion, the Easter celebration symbolizing triumph, and the descent of the Holy Spirit, who assists humanity with God's guidance, persist. About 1 Corinthians 11:2, the term "teaching" aligns with the concept of 'culture.' In this context, "teachings" serves as a feminine plural, accusative noun that signifies elements consistently transmitted to future generations as a form of tradition (Thayer's 1997). The tradition described here encompasses not just theoretical knowledge but also the application of this knowledge into practice, becoming habitual in daily life. The transmission of this tradition occurs through both spoken and written means. Furthermore, human culture in this aspect is shaped by the extent to which individuals adhere to the teachings (traditions) available. Cultured individuals can be identified as those who comply with established customs. Referring to Matthew 15:2, which is translated into Indonesian as "customs," and is expressed in the singular accusative noun form of femininity, it can be understood as a legacy consistently inherited by future generations to ensure its continuity and permanence in human existence. Similar to studies from the Old Testament, the idea of culture in the New Testament period was also transmitted predominantly through men. Women were often perceived merely as supplementary to life, although Paul, in several writings, took steps to advocate for women, including widows.

From the two studies above, the definition of a cultured human can be understood as an individual who adheres to the traditions and regulations passed down through generations. However, from a Christian perspective, there is a critical stance towards any traditions that conflict with Christian teachings. This perspective is exemplified in the writings of Paul and is echoed in the first letter of Peter, which emphasizes the futility of living solely by ancestral traditions. Furthermore, the significance of Christ's sacrifice is highlighted as an effort to rid human life of its futility. In the New Testament, Jesus' interactions with cultural norms are particularly revealing, especially in his discussions with the Pharisees and scribes. They criticized Jesus' disciples for not following certain traditions, such as hand washing. In response, Jesus emphasized the hypocrisy of strictly adhering to cultural norms while neglecting the

essence of love. Ultimately, love is presented as the fundamental criterion for what it means to be a cultured human. This insight invites a deeper reflection on the values that should inform human behavior and cultural adherence.

Cultured People in Christian Theology

According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (2008), being cultured involves possessing an advanced mind and intellect that is shaped by one's culture. Culture encompasses thought, reasoning, and established habits that shape our understanding of the world and guide our behavior as social beings. From a Christian theological perspective, cultural development has roots that trace back to the Old Testament, highlighting the importance of preserving certain cultures while recognizing that others may no longer serve a beneficial purpose. When God communicates with humanity, language and culture play essential roles as mediums that shape human thought patterns. Throughout His incarnation as Jesus Christ, He utilized local cultural contexts to convey His teachings effectively. Cultures that do not conflict with biblical teachings can coexist with faith, but those that do not align with God's will are subject to critique and transformation through the Word, as demonstrated by prophets, judges, kings, and Jesus Himself. This process leads to the development of a culture that reflects a Christian worldview.

In our contemporary millennial context, cultured individuals are increasingly influenced by their cultural experiences and understanding of God, enabling them to express their faith meaningfully within Christianity. Divine revelation and the communication of God's plans for humanity highlight the unique tasks given to prophets, who are strengthened and equipped by God to fulfill their missions. It is essential to note that God's calling varies for each person and can necessitate perseverance through challenges. The model of discipleship that Jesus presents is notably distinct from conventional human approaches, which often focus on outward appearances and social status. In contrast, Jesus' model emphasizes the heart and spiritual development, inviting all individuals—regardless of their backgrounds—to engage in a profound relationship with Him (Sitanggang 2023). This engaged approach can enrich the understanding and practice of systematic theology, encouraging contributions from individuals beyond traditional theological circles (Lumbantobing 2018).

Cultured individuals recognize the various realities occurring in life, and Christianity should therefore play a role in understanding these realities. It is no longer sufficient for Christianity to remain in a purely theological space, focusing only on the afterlife; instead, it must engage more deeply with the context of human existence in today's world. Suppose Christianity can provide rational answers while staying true to the theological values of faith. In that case, people in the millennial era will not only benefit personally but will also bear witness to these truths throughout the world.

From a Christian perspective, a cultured individual will emerge if theology or the church adopts an inclusive and dialogical approach toward everyone. A culture that develops through such a thoughtful framework can restore moral (ethical) values to life while acknowledging progress in the millennial era.

Basics of Christian Teaching about Cultured People

Christian teaching takes the position of understanding that cultural pluralism is the basis for the salvation received by everyone, even though, in essence, they do not know Christianity. Therefore, Christianity takes its place through contextualization in contemporary understanding so that Christianity's position is not to oppress the existence of culture but is able to adapt while still filtering understanding of culture so that it does not conflict with Christian doctrine. In this way, dialogic theology can consider cultural pluralism so that all creation and human life are understood as gifts from God (Aritonang 2018). It discusses how every culture serves as a means to understand God's greatness and omnipotence,

emphasizing the integration of theology with culture, particularly in Southeast Asia. It highlights the Christian belief that God entrusts culture to humanity to aid in personal development, artistic expression, and achieving a meaningful life. Additionally, it notes that praise, as a cultural form, is prominently featured in the Old Testament, specifically in Psalm 150, which details various expressions of praise through musical instruments and the idea that all living beings should offer praise.

Helmut Richard Niebuhr also studied how the Christian ethical approach is directed towards culture (Niebuhr 1951). There are at least five attitudes lived by every Christian, namely a radical attitude (Christ against culture), an accommodative attitude (the Christ of culture), a synthetic attitude (Christ above culture), a dualistic attitude (Christ and culture in paradox), and a transformative attitude (Christ the Transformer of Culture). A radical attitude positions faith and culture in a very contradictory position. This results in the practice of eliminating culture because it is considered to damage the lives of believers. A statement that is contrary to an accommodative attitude that utilizes culture in teaching the values of faith. The synthetic attitude views culture and the Christian faith as two complementary parts. It has a different meaning from the dualistic attitude, which is rejected in some cultures but is accommodated in other cultures. The final attitude is transformative, an attitude given to culture by first illuminating this culture with the light of the Bible. Thus, culture will be well-received when it has been transformed and renewed under the basic teachings of Christianity.

Christian Theologians' Views on Martin Luther's Cultured People

The breadth of his study of culture, especially regarding objects specifically labeled as cultural, was also quite broad in discussing and giving his views. One of the cultures that Luther most clearly rejected in his postulates was indulgences. Luther broadly explored culture, primarily focusing on cultural objects. He strongly opposed indulgences, arguing they came from the selfish motives of some religious leaders. He believed that people must use their free will to make good choices regarding indulgences. Luther also emphasized that everyone should tap into their natural abilities and the gifts of grace they receive to understand and pursue what is good in life. He used the term "communio," meaning "meeting" or "association," to explain how people should actively participate in achieving a holy life together. For Luther, culture is not just about sharing material things; it is about recognizing that everyone is equal because Christ is the Head of the Church. The Church, as the Body of Christ, should reflect this in its members.

Even though times have changed, the foundation of culture remains centered on Christ. Culture should be seen as an extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit, which shows God's power in creating and gathering everyone with joy. While culture can grow, especially in today's world, it must consistently align with Christian values. The teachings of the Word must be evident in how cultured people behave, helping culture to achieve a true and lasting meaning. People can shape culture through their actions and thoughts, but the teachings of the Word cannot be changed. The Word represents the greatest gift that offers salvation and cannot be replaced by human efforts (*solagratia*).

Alfred Louis Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn

Alfred Louis, who is a cultural anthropologist from America, and his friend Clyde Kluckhohn argued that culture is at least composed of patterns that clearly and also implicitly indicate human behavior through typical symbols within specific groups. The essential essence of culture consists in the fact that culture contains traditional ideas that are passed down to subsequent generations and selected historically based on the values contained therein, and especially the values inherent in those traditional ideas. The cultural system is considered, on the one hand, as a product of action and, on the other hand,

as an element conditioning further action on a phenomenon. Every culture has a concept of defense that is based on the principle of justice so that there is a prohibition on things that are not right. The first culture that is born in the social environment, namely culture within the family, also contains directions for what the family thinks is right (Kellenberger 2001). Because culture is based on kinship, Kluckhohn's understanding strongly rejects all forms of immoral culture, such as rape, idealism that deviates from the marriage system, harsh demands for obligations towards the social environment, or culture that considers group interests to be higher than individual interests.

Karl Barth

Karl Barth's theological view states that every human being can know God only based on God being pleased with that human being, so there is no correct way for humans to know God except by God Himself. So, to know God requires good faith, and that is what is most important in the study of religion and culture (Barth 1958). Considering that part of culture also includes "language," every language used by humans must be able to show God's position through the feelings given by the heart. Barth emphasized that culture must be able to introduce God because He is the source of that culture. Humans must not immediately feel that humans have power over culture, which is undoubtedly wrong because, in essence, the one who has power is God Himself in His trinity. Culture essentially leads human life to true freedom, namely, no longer being under oppression and deviant power. When Barth deepened his understanding of culture by confronting it with politics, Barth discovered the position that cultured humans are not only focused on the study of God but also use certain symbols for human relationships with other humans. So, culture must continue to look at the position of fellow humans and the position of humans towards God. Thus, the most concrete basis of culture is God himself because culture is not part of the eternal possession of humans, but rather the *Imago Dei*, which will always be inherent in humans even when life after death exists in humans themselves.

Teaching Documents - Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP) Theological Documents on Cultured People

One form of teaching in Christianity that ultimately developed to guide cultured humans to follow their era, especially the millennial era, is *Ruhut Parmahanion dohot Paminsangon Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP)*. The establishment of the Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP) RPP as a legal system for pastoral care and the church itself in 1987 did not lead to immediate implementation or development. Cultural changes have been a driving force behind the evolution of the HKBP RPP theological documents. From 2017 to 2018, the church conducted an exploration and refinement of the HKBP RPP by examining the evolving cultural context, referencing other theological documents, and addressing critical issues in each HKBP region.

Additionally, the 2002 HKBP Basic Rules and Procedures have continued to evolve in response to cultural developments, reaching the third amendment. This development process has been extensive, involving the formation of a commission, organizing seminars, and facilitating discussions from the congregational level to the central level. These efforts aimed to prepare and establish the rules and regulations as a theological document that guides the congregation to live as cultured individuals. The primary goal of these amendments is to position the church as a cultured entity that serves as a beacon of justice, peace, and environmental integrity in the world. The Batak Protestant Christian Church's Confession serves as a guiding tool for cultured individuals to understand and practice correct teachings from a Christian perspective (Protestant Batak Christian Huria 2013). In his opening remarks, Rev. Dr. Jr. Hutauruk indicated that the emergence of the 1996 Confession aimed to equip every cultured

individual to navigate the complexities of life, particularly in an era of globalization and millennial change, which can threaten the preservation of existing cultures.

Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP) Confession

Article 5 of the 1996 HKBP Confession addresses culture and the environment, emphasizing that culture is defined in terms of the responsibilities assigned to humanity. This responsibility to care for culture is recognized as a vital aspect of the Confession. The Church utilizes the Confession to reject cultural elements associated with paganism, as these contradict the Word of God. According to the Confession, authentic culture fosters and enhances human relationships, allowing the glory of God to shine even more brightly. Culture encompasses a variety of expressions, including diverse languages, different musical instruments used in cultural traditions and in worship of God, artistic endeavors, and knowledge that broadens our understanding of culture. Additionally, it includes scriptural teachings that inspire the praise of God.

A fundamental characteristic of culture is its liberating nature, akin to the way Jesus Christ's work liberated humanity from sin. This cultural liberation provides joy and freedom without imposing demands; it encourages participation in granting freedom not only to humans but to all of creation. Furthermore, concerning the environment, culture should strive to protect and restore land, air, and water from harm, as these elements are crucial for human life.

Ruhut Parmahanion Dohot Paminsangon (RPP Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP))

In Chapter Four of the Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP) RPP, a list of cultural forms that can make human life far from Christian values is outlined. The first part is wedding traditions. Perhaps every culture requires marriage among the citizens of that culture, and indeed, cultured humans are brought to the position of humans who ultimately have a life partner. Moreover, in God's Word, He commands every human being to have children and grandchildren, and the only step is to form a family culture. However, according to the Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP) RPP, in the marriage tradition, for every married person, it is prohibited to expel one's partner unless it is proven that the partner has committed adultery. Therefore, the culture of divorce, which is currently widespread in the millennial era, is firmly rejected by the Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP) RPP. Not only that, according to a Christian perspective, every cultured human being is also prohibited from marrying someone who already has a previous partner (a person who is a widow/widower due to divorce). Moreover, the age limit for marriage, according to the Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP) RPP, is also regulated, namely a minimum of 19 years for men and 16 years for women.

The church culture rejects several forms of marriage, including a child marrying their stepmother, a man marrying his sister, and relationships between close relatives, such as marrying a cousin from either side (father's brother's daughter or mother's sister's daughter). Christianity emphasizes the importance of family values, insisting that marriages should not be based solely on worldly desires but should align with God's will as expressed in His Word.

Consequently, two male siblings cannot marry two female siblings at the same time. Additionally, Christianity firmly opposes polygamy and polyandry. The church also disapproves of gambling traditions that may arise when caring for mothers and newborns, and it rejects the practice of delaying a child's baptism in order to organize a Thanksgiving party for that baptism. Moreover, the church will reprimand and potentially discipline congregational families who give birth to a boy less than nine months after the wedding blessing, or a girl less than eight months after the wedding ceremony.

Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP) Church Ende Book

In the Ende Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP) Book, based on Jesus' teaching during His ministry, He also provided a new cultural system in his teaching. The teaching system is described in Ende's Book No. 829 with the title "New Law." In the lyrics of this song, it is explained that Jesus gave a new law (cultural system), namely the position of a cultured human being, which is characterized by loving fellow human beings as much as loving oneself. Such love will be an illustration of how God and Jesus love each other and are one.

Moreover, this attitude of mutual love will be the main characteristic of everyone who wants to become a disciple of Jesus. The second is Ende's Book No. 827, "Marbunga Hata I." The word "Hata" literally means word or language, and language is a significant part of the culture. The language in the Ende Book is also interpreted as the Word of God, which means that every word and language must be able to be realized in the light of the Word of God. Every language of cultured humans must be able to fulfill the call from the kingdom of God, which makes every human being a Child of God. Every language must be able to provide salvation in a way that every word in the language must be able to carry good news so that everyone experiences perfect liberation. The language of cultured humans will also be a guide for everyone because the words expressed are good. The language that comes from cultured humans is a language that can be a light amid millennial-era life, which is increasingly dark and blurry regarding Christian values. Moreover, the strongest cultural values are contained in Ende Book No. 369 with the title "Na Marhahaanggi" or in Indonesian, "We are Brothers." Brotherhood in the Christian perspective, as depicted in the lyrics of this song, is when brotherhood exists in every person regardless of their language or ethnicity, which is certain that everyone is united in God the Father, his Son Jesus Christ, who is the redeemer for all humans, and the Holy Spirit as the source of grace and help. It is even explained that in cultural diversity, God is also the provider of all human needs, and so every creation is maintained, not based on the power of that creation, but because of the grace received.

Contextualization of Cultured People in the Millennial Era

While not all cultural systems embrace a Christian perspective, integration is undoubtedly possible. Some cultural systems may conflict with Christian beliefs; however, this does not preclude the possibility of merging Christianity with those cultures. Good reconciliation can lead to a culture enriched by Christian values, reinforcing the existing understanding of right and wrong that the culture held before it engaged with Christianity. Culture consists of habits that are upheld over time, so, understandably, symbols with spiritual significance are present within it. Thus, the Christian perspective should be able to penetrate cultural realms (Starkloff 1994). To help individuals improve within their cultural contexts. Individual expressions of Christianity can seamlessly blend into a culture if the intention is to build upon it rather than dismantle it as Christian culture evolves.

Christian theology offers profound wisdom that equips individuals to make sound choices based on their experiences and knowledge, enabling them to lead lives marked by faith, love, and hope in God. However, it is crucial to emphasize that each person must embrace their responsibilities to avoid becoming overly dependent on others, despite the close-knit clan structure of the Batak culture (Sitanggang and Silalahi 2023).

The church, in its teaching among today's congregation, must be able to see existing cultural developments. The development of technology and information systems cannot be denied, as it encourages the expansion of cultures into the congregation. So, it is not surprising that if we examine it more deeply, there will be many cultures that are a means of idol worship. The cult of technology and the attitude of normalizing comfort in worship, because it has accepted technological progress, are

evidence of deviations in accepting culture from outside society, which ultimately manifests in an attitude of self- or group arrogance. Virtual society in Indonesia, especially in the religious context, presents complex dynamics.

On the one hand, social media is an effective means to spread religion and interact, but on the other hand, it also poses challenges, such as the spread of misinformation and polarization. It is essential to utilize the positive potential of social media while being aware of its negative impacts and to strengthen religious moderation to create harmony in religious life in cyberspace (Suprayitno and Wahyudi 2020). In the Bible, the Old Testament also describes several cultures that result in sinfulness. A culture that offered the results of work to God, in line with the narrative of Abel's murder, resulted in sin covering Cain. Jealousy due to Cain's understanding that God gave a different response in accepting Cain's and Abel's offerings led to the murder of his brother, Abel. Also, Genesis 4:22 states that Tubal Cain, who was given the talent to become a coppersmith and blacksmith, should have used his talents to make life easier, but in the end, he was involved in declaring a world that was not in peace. This talent ultimately became a medium that helped in warfare because the blacksmith's talent was also used to make war equipment. In today's congregation, it must be emphasized that every form of praise and all forms of spiritual values must lead to faith in the living Word of God, namely, Jesus Christ. Traditions that were previously accepted by humans sometimes gave rise to instability among humans themselves, so they were pushed away from the values of a Christian perspective. However, in essence, culture, specifically Batak culture, still contains relatively high levels of Christian values (Tanuwidjaja and Uda 2020). However, the feeling of dissatisfaction with religion, whether because of failure to achieve expectations or because of disloyalty, leads to several deviant practices. The church, in its teaching, must emphasize that there is no negotiation regarding any form of such deviation

Contextualization of Church Teaching about Cultured People in the Millennial Era in the context of Pluralist Indonesian Society

The Church in the world will never stand alone, as the larger context includes various elements that may either align with or contradict the Church's position. This reality also applies to plurality on both global and national scales. Plurality promotes an understanding that encourages individuals to adopt attitudes that foster respect for and appreciation of diversity (Lumbantobing 2019).

Through an understanding of pluralism, the Church can actively engage with and respond wisely to the diverse cultures developing in the millennial era. This engagement helps clarify people's perspectives on life by the Word, ensuring that it does not dilute the doctrinal values of religion. Indonesia, for example, is characterized by a rich tapestry of cultures, both those clearly outlined by the Ministry of Culture and others that have yet to be formally recognized. In this pluralistic Indonesian society, theologian Surya S. Giamsjah expressed his ideas through the concept of Warung Theology, which emphasizes the importance of relational dynamics in Javanese culture, especially in informal settings like "warungs" (local eateries). Cultural relationships emerge when individuals gather in a communal space to support one another, thereby maintaining the cycle of life within a diverse world.

The development of local theology is crucial within the Indonesian context, given the nation's richness in religion, race, language, and culture. Local theology enables this diversity to transcend superficiality, achieving a meaningful theological significance (Sitanggang and Silalahi 2023). Church teachings that encourage a cultured congregation allow members to preserve their organizational characteristics through cultural traditions in areas such as teaching, leadership, and practice. The transformation of believers' lives occurs as they navigate communities where the Gospel (Good News)

shapes their attitudes, worldviews, life values, and overall behavior. Contextualization emerges as a vital process for Christians (Sitanggang 2022).

With this foundational understanding, it is hoped that the Christian perspective will become more inclusive, open, and dialogical, rooted in the acknowledgment that culture and the Church (Christianity) are interdependent. The relationship between Christianity and the social environment is essential, as a Church that understands itself about others is no longer selfish but rather exists for all humanity (Moltmann 1977). In the millennial era, the Church has the opportunity to embrace evolving cultures and contribute to theological discourse, ensuring it does not rigidly oppose them but instead guides those cultures towards a new theology. Relying solely on early interpretations risks misplacing contemporary cultures in the eyes of Christian teachings.

CONCLUSION

According to the Christian perspective, a cultured individual is defined as someone who adheres to habits aligned with Christian teachings. These teachings stem from a comprehensive understanding of Christian doctrine and its implications for life practices. The concept of a cultured person extends beyond an individual to encompass the broader community. Culture is expected to evolve in response to advancements in industrial and communication technologies. However, human limitations influence the discernment of which forms of progress are beneficial and which should be avoided if they do not align with Christian values.

Additionally, human egoism can undermine the cultured character of an individual, leading to a lifestyle that deviates from Christian teachings. Presently, cultural trends may include high-profile concert performances by foreign musicians, which often come with significant costs. Many pursue these activities for prestige without critically assessing their alignment with Christian values. Culture should promote life and serve as a blessing to the world. The church, as an organization, is tasked with fostering the sense of the Body of Christ, enabling individuals to embody the concept of being a "cultured people" within their era from a Christian viewpoint. Consequently, all cultural expressions should reflect the will of God, as exemplified by Jesus Christ, and seek fulfillment through the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who strive for a cultured existence grounded in faith.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aritonang, Jan S. (2018). *Contemporary Theologies*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Barth, Karl. (1958). *Church and Dogmatics*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
- Batak Protestant Christian Huria (2022), Ende Books. Tarutung Pearaja: HKBP.
- Gunther, W. dan Link, H.G. 1976. *Theological Dictionary of The New Testament Vol. 2*, ed. Colin Brown. Grand Rapids : The Zondervan Corporation.
- Haldar. 1974. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament Vol 1*. peny. William B. Eerdmans. USA : Library of congress Cataloging.
- Hick, John. 1985. *Problems of Religious Pluralism*. New York : St, Martin's Press.
- Hill, A. E., & Walton, J. H. (2013). *Old Testament Survey*. Malang: Wheat Mas.
- Huria Kristen Batak Protestant (2019), *Basic Rules and Procedures for HKBP 2002 and Guidelines for Its Implementation*. Pematangsiantar: HKBP Printing Business Unit.
- Huria Kristen Batak Protestant (2020), *Ruhut Parmahanion dohot Paminsangon HKBP*. Pematangsiantar: HKBP Printing Business Unit.
- Karkkaeinen, Veli-Matti. 2017. *Tritunggal & Pluralisme Agama : Doktrin Tritunggal dalam Teologi Kristen tentang Agama-agama*. terj. Fandy Handoko Tanujaya. Jakarta : Gunung Mulia.

- Knitter, Paul. 2008. *Satu Bumi Banyak Agama : Dialog Multi-Agama dan Tanggung Jawab Global*. terj. Niko A. Jakarta : Gunung Mulia.
- Kellenberger, J. (2001). *Moral Relativism, Moral Diversity, & Human Relationships*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania University Press.
- Labobar, Kresbinol. 2022. *Pendidikan Agama Kristen Dalam Masyarakat Majemuk Multikultural*. Klaten : Penerbit Lakeisha.
- Luther, Martin. 1997. *Martin Luther Of Works Vol.2*. USA : The Ages Digital Library Collections.
- Lohse, Bernhard. (2018). *Martin Luther's Theology: Historical Development and Systematic Theology*. Surabaya: Momentum.
- Lumbantobing, Darwin. (2015). *Theology in the Free Market*. Pematangsiantar: L-SAPA.
- Lumbantobing, Darwin. (2018). *Growing Locally Bearing Universal Fruit*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Lumbantobing, Darwin . (2019). *Repositioning the Gospel Message*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Moltmann, Jurgen. (1977). *The Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit*. Sun Fransciso: Haper & Row.
- Newbiggin, Lesslie. 1999. *Injil dalam Masyarakat Majemuk*. Jakarta : Gunung Mulia.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. (1951). *Christ & Culture*. New York: Harper Toochbooks.
- Niftrik, G. C. (1981). *Modern Dogmatics*. Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia.
- Protestant Batak Christian Huria (2013). *Panindangion Haporseaon: The Confession of Faith of HKBP: Confession of Faith of HKBP Konfessie 1951 & 1996*. Pematang Siantar: HKBP Printing Business Unit.
- Ramdhan, Muhammad (2021), *Research Methods*, Surabaya: Cipta Media Nusantara (CMN).
- Saptandari, Pinky. 2022. *Antropologi Pembangunan : Dalam Bingkai Pluralisme dan Feminisme*. Surabaya :Airlangga University Press.
- Sidiq, Umar & Choiri, Moh. Miftachul, 2019, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif di Bidang Pendidikan*, Nata Karya, Ponorogo.
- Sitanggang, Pintor Marihot, 2022, "Menuju Gereja yang Inklusif dan Kontekstual", dalam *Teologi Hospitalitas*. *Jurnal Teologi Vocatio Dei STT HKBP*, Vol. IV No. 1 Okt 2022, Pematangsiantar.
- Sitanggang, Pintor Marihot (2021). *Sola Gratia: The Reconciliator's Reconciliation*. Bandung: Widina Bhakti Persada.
- Sitanggang, Pintor Marihot (2022), "Inculturation" in *Encounter A Journal of Theological Scholarship*, Volume 82, Number 3, Indianapolis, Indiana: Christian Theological Seminary.
- Sitanggang, Pintor Marihot (2023), *My God is My Hope Theodicy – Faith – Discipleship*, Bandung: Widina Bhakti Persada.
- Sitanggang, Pintor Marihot & Silalahi, Sylvia Wijaya (2023), "Design of Church Social Theology: A Theological Study of God Who Suffers in Choan Seng Song Theology" in the *Scientific Journal of Religiosity Entity Humanity (JIREH)*, Vol. 5, no. 1.
- Starkloff, Carl F. (1994). *Inculturation and Cultural Systems*. *Theological Studies*, 66-99.
- Suprayitno, A., & Wahyudi, W. (2020). *Character Education in the Millennial Era*. Yogyakarta: Deepublish.
- Tanuwidjaja, Sundoro and Uda, Samuel (2020) "Critical Faith and Culture", in *Indonesian Journal of Contextual Theology*, Vol. 1 No. 1.
- Thayer's, J. H. (1997). *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament*. Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers.
- Yusuf, A. Muri. 2014. *Metode Penelitian : Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan Penelitian Gabungan*. Jakarta : Kencana.