

# Postmodernism and Preaching of Grace

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**Abstract:** The civilization of the postmodernism society which is a collection of various narratives rejects the metanarrative of the journey of human life. In the era of modernity, the slogan breathed by God is dead, the struggle of humans to find what is lost in the root of the idea of philosophy's affair with the Bible. Aristotle's thought entered the Bible veritas and each became autonomous. There is no longer any connection between humanity and veritas. They were seen long ago in the philanthropic Job of the East, in the Samaritan woman and in the Ethiopian eunuch. This article is about the needs of postmodernism people in the framework of preaching grace where the epicenter is no longer human beings but Christ who has risen and is alive.

**Keywords:** postmodernist, metanarrative, human, veritas, grace, Christ.

## I. PRELIMINARY

The charm of the postmodernism world can be seen from its subjectivism. Unlike a century ago, it was more concerned with the objectivity of reality. In fact, Postmodernism and his passion for meaning in life expect a cohesive process to take place<sup>1</sup>. In recognizing the realities of life. But the reality is not like that. The need for an adequate metanarrative has not been met and even rejected a metanarrative that summarizes all human experiences in the mortal and vulnerable<sup>2</sup> world. Various issues such as injustice, inequality and disparity, the threat of war, and the latest Covid-19 pandemic require a comprehensive explanation of the existing phenomena.

The 21st century in regional and global communities to the lowest, namely local conditions, everything is now connected because of the internet network and android-based smart phones. This form of connectedness makes the public space present without regional barriers and restrictions as happened in the past century. The description of the presence of revolution 4.0 in the private and institutional space leads to the realization of a single order later (one world-one order). Most likely it can happen. This will later have implications for the attitude of believers to the global social reality. Complex and full of complexity in relationships that call for full explanation.

Strive for a narrative with the pattern of preaching the good news in the sense of preaching by evoking the center of human consciousness in postmodernism to the formation of

spirituality as a disciple of Christ, at least it will run simultaneously in its implementation. Theology with compassion but also theology by enriching human life. Specific theology with a load of grace (sola gratia) is expected to foster hope in faith and sensitivity. Christ did that by the well at Sychar, to a Samaritan woman who needed a full and thorough explanation of true worship<sup>3</sup>.

The pattern of theology in the verbatim format of Christ with the Samaritan woman contains content and form that also represents the world view of postmodernism society today. How to integrate the concrete life of Samaritans with their local religion and will their spiritual life at that time reflect the true faith? Christ theologically uses a clue: living water, while the Samaritan woman puts forward the sacred mountain Gerizim.

In fact, the flow of change is an opportunity for the Spirit of Jesus to work properly and at a time when objects need enlightenment because of their primary needs. The reality of the importance of the Spirit of Jesus in the postmodernism world is similar to when everything was unformed and empty. LAI translates using the word 'pitch darkness covered the deep' Genesis 1. This text reminds of the fact that everything before existed and existed out of order.

The reality of this pre-creation shows that the planets of the solar system that humans are part of and reside in do need a stable state. Because instability leads to the absence of form and content. Humans need not only stability but also content and form. This is what makes the postmodernism world itself has a picture of the absence of form and content.

This kind of world needs stability both in terms of its form of life and the content of life of all human beings on this planet. The world of postmodernism apart from the absence of content and form also has a fundamental life root, the philosophy of God's death. Nietzsche's character spit out the slogan God is dead! The point of his words is to say that humans are now living without God. Therefore, postmodernism society and civilization at least have a picture of contemporary humans, in fact they are overcoming a comprehensive world view.

Reflecting on this situation, in the text of the book of Acts, there is an official from Ethiopia who needs answers to prophetic literature in the form of readings about the figure described by Isaiah. He (the eunuch) concretely needs a

<sup>1</sup> Katerina Koci, Interpreting the Bible Against Postmodern Biblical Hermeneutics: The Role of Time and Tradition. Theologica 2014. roc.4. c.2.p.221.

<sup>2</sup> the elements that support human life are fragile.

<sup>3</sup> John 4:1-24. The understanding of the women's locality is indicated in the phrase 'on Mount Gerizim' as the center of their worship.

mentor in his life journey so that his journey to interpret the meaning of life in trust has a strong footing. The Spirit of Jesus revealed it to Philip and brought him together on a journey. This story is brilliant because the eunuch believed and gave himself to be baptized. This safety story is concise, fast and to the point. This is a theological description by the author of Luke how believers obey the dynamics of the Spirit of Jesus.

What about the context of theology in today's postmodernism society?

## II. 1ST CENTURY.

In many ways, modern culture is a high and sophisticated culture, containing a wide variety of valuable anthropological insights and strengths, with surprising adaptability and openness to absorb, clarify, and unify. This one side is a reflection of the human self that is open to postmodernism society.

Yet at this point it emerges, in most cases, as a 'culture without faith', a culture deliberately cut off from the faith that gave it life, and thus, ultimately, a fragile culture. This was clearly seen some time ago a 16-year-old teenager in Bandung slid from the 12th floor of a mall in Dalem Kaum, Bandung City. This is one of the dilemmas of living in a complex world without any solid guidelines for him. The spiritual interiority still looks empty and neat, it's not clear what the content is. The description of the socio-humanities was also experienced by Christ. The narrative of Matthew 4:1-11 contains the devil's form of temptation and the structure of Christ's rejection of agitated, veiled persuasion by the devil. One of them, the devil pushed Jesus to slide off the ridge of the temple because there was an angel of God who would support him (v. 6<sup>4</sup>).

Likewise with changes in human beings, the follow in him is inherently his culture which is the legacy of the transmission of values and attitudes from his ancestors. Whether it's his beliefs, symbols, customs and values that shape him into a cultured human being, even though he is part of the local community. Nevertheless, such a culture was a proper way for him to navigate his short life. The basic question is, will his life journey be as brilliant as the eunuch from Ethiopia? Uncertain of course.

The example of human cultured and in need of spiritual enlightenment in the past is in Job. His human side is getting better and more impactful because he positions himself as a generous and caring person for others. Job is a philanthropist from the East. Job is an example of hard work, honesty and integrity. Job was also a pious figure and glorified and respected his God. But on the other hand, he

<sup>4</sup> Satan has always breathed human beings with doubts about the human status of Christ who is the Son of God. Satan even tries to shake the structure and content of Christ's life by committing suicide as evidence. Postmodernism people seem to have the same enthusiasm about their status, who they really are through proof.

experienced a distortion of his beliefs. When suffering comes in waves. Job lost much of his normal life. Be it property, children to his wife in time also left him. The journey of such a life is still a half-way journey. And when there was great suffering, the meaning became tasteless to Job. Philanthropic charm alone is not enough to answer the meaning of his suffering. Humanity without veritas brings emptiness. The 16-year-old teenager in Bandung is one of the real proofs that the human side has stopped because it has no meaning.

This description occurs a lot in human life in the 21st century. How almost most people are now starting to rise again and improve themselves when life is not easy. The Covid 19 pandemic has locked the lives of people and believers and has an impact on their faith. Covid 19 is a one-hundred-year cycle of a pandemic following the Spanish flu a century ago which claimed fifty million lives and became the world's catastrophe at that time. Covid 19 is now similar to the reality of the past. More than three million people have died until now and the epicenter is no longer in Wuhan but in America and Brazil.

In the midst of the rapid development of science and technology, especially the advancement of ICT - Information Communication Technology through the internet network, integration with smart technology and data search engines to artificial intelligence technology plus interface (face to face technology) in communicating. The form of interaction in such a way affects the formation of the individual self, it is even possible for individuals who were previously connected in social relations and physically visible. Now it uses virtual media and is seen without physical touch such as shaking hands, chatting and so on. That fact is the concrete reality of the postmodernism community. The situation is limited due to the pandemic. Including in community with fellow believers. On-site face-to-face meetings have been replaced by on-line. This includes worship and learning to transactions in productive economic activities. All of that is framed by what the internet of things recognizes.

Where is the functional role of faith in the 21st century today when believers and others lead difficult lives? How about the person of God in Christ will be manifest to the faith of the believer? Because the reality is difficult, humans will present a question where is God really when he is facing suffering<sup>5</sup>?

## III. PROBLEMATIC

Postmodernism society's civilization is at least a transmission of content and such a process requires final interpretation. Faith in sublimation theology requires that God existed before anything else existed and that He has concern for human dilemmas. Therefore, theology in the sense of promoting God's grace in the 21st century is a necessity and this contains elementary problems:

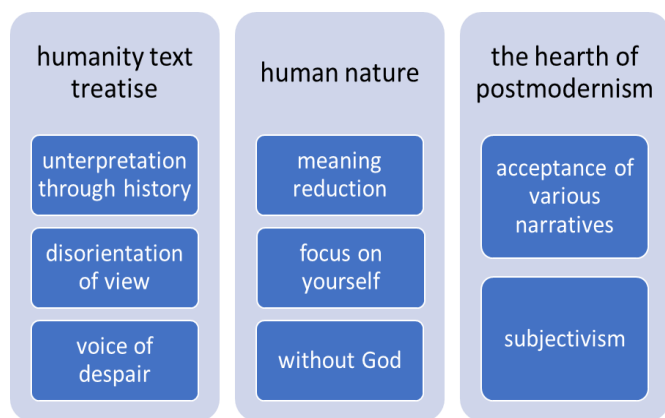
<sup>5</sup> **ha-im ein ezra-ti** : help me within me...Job 6:13. This cry for help of Job was also echoed by Christ when he cried out; My God my God why have you forsaken me? – Mark 15:34

“What exactly are the contents, visions, doctrines and needs of Postmodernism’s current perspective in dealing with humans who have lost their substantive view of life as a whole? will grace be the foundation of faith in a meaningful life?”

IV. SUGGESTED APPROACH

The fruit of science is technology. It is hoped that it will functionally strengthen culture and accelerate it so that cultural adherents experience challenges and constructively push themselves towards progress. The dynamics of culture, progress, and person-to-person change currently accelerated by ICT are expected to be realized. Contemporary reality indicates that human beings must be challenged, not only strengthened, they must be made to face their potential, their mistakes and responsibilities, even their calling. The truth about humans is not fully available because of today’s technology. Based on these provisions, the current method approach in theology cannot be separated from several aspects that are interrelated with one another. Described as such.

Figure 1. Conceptualization Approach



Starting from the heart of postmodernism which is self-centered as a measure (homo mensura) and denying God’s work from the past until now, postmodernism people are voicing despair and results like Job using various issues from others as the main source to interpret his history in the past and present. And neglect to think about the future<sup>6</sup>, the subjectivist postmodernism society prefers to reminisce about the past. Meanwhile, from God’s side, the past is a fragment of individual history that should be carried to the future where God is preparing the human journey to its final phase in glory. The irony of the Postmodernism people’s humanity is that they find themselves in the past and not directed to a hopeful future (Jer 29:11). Excerpts of the text from the Creator to foster hope in adequate belief, are as follows:

<sup>6</sup> Sundanese people, for example, have idiomatic expressions in life, namely: ‘kumaha engke’: how will it be and don’t want to mess around with the phrase: ‘engke kumaha’: how about later. Sundanese idiomatic seen pragmatism.

“For I know what plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for peace and not plans for disaster, to give you a future full of hope.”

V. POSTMODERNISM HUMANITY

Kenneth Gergen gives a critical note,

With the spread of postmodern consciousness, we see the demise of personal definition, reason, authority. . . All intrinsic properties of the human being, along with moral worth and personal commitment, are lost from view.<sup>7</sup>

Modernity as the ripe fruit of enlightenment glorifies and echoes autonomous rationality in the human social context, and the contemporary postmodernism school actually rejects all of these statements. Truly humanity without an objective self-touch instead of a self-representation of the creation of the Creator. There is even no room for faith in living his life as a cultured human being.

Next, despite much of its “politically correct” rhetoric, postmodernism is anti-essentialist and anti-humanist.<sup>8</sup> There is no universal human essence, no stable personal identity, and consequently, no inherent human values. Humans derive a sense of individual identity and value as a person from customs that have never been taken seriously. So it can be assumed that one’s identity, values, and rights to life are coincidences of cultural origin, not properties intrinsic to human nature. This is a description of the irony of the contemporary postmodernism human society that lives in ambiguity. Want to be meaningful but not rooted in an adequate source.

In terms of the contribution of faith and revelation to the reality of postmodernism human life, it is necessary to search for the core or center of human life. In order for the discovery of the essence to be able to contribute in tolerating secularist life which is heading to its lowest point. Postmodernism society for abandoning its ultimate value as a bearer of the image and likeness of God and ignoring the finality of Christ on Calvary. This fact is exactly like the warnings of the writer to the Hebrews, especially chapter 12. In order to be healed, a person who wants and may have left his creed and deviated from the proper course of the race, then he must return to the epicenter of his life. Namely Christ as stated by the author in verses 2, 3 and 4 in the same chapter.

Postmodernism defines the impossibility for humans to be like God in their present and future lives. Logos for Hellenistic culture is impersonal and it is just a principle of rationality because it understands this world in a causal, orderly and closed system. It has also happened in the Hellenistic atmosphere of the first century church. This is on the one hand. the contents of humanity in the past interpreted

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Gergen, *The Saturated Self* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 228, 229

<sup>8</sup> David Michael Levin, *The Opening of Vision: Nihilism and the Postmodern Situation* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 405-08.

it as a rational being without the slightest awareness of the presence of the Creator.

So, where do you start preaching the deepest needs of today's postmodernism society so that the spirit of the times doesn't get eroded and they become dehumanized and depersonalized individuals? There needs to be looking about the creation of space - for the use of terms in the Gospel but the content used is different. The writer of the Gospel of John uses the word Logos but its content is very different from the Hellenistic logos. The same thing with the use of the word race or race in the athletic field of marathon running. This description contains the revelation of God that will fill the empty space on the reality of individual life that requires objectification of his world view. The Apostle Paul is similar to the fact that John's usage is based on the theology of creation, in 2 Corinthians 4:6 God who spoke in the empty and formless space of the Creation of the universe now speaks in the dark hearts of humans to get real light. It is believed that individuals in the 21st century today still have empty spaces that can be filled with revelations that awaken their belief in God.

Content and form in contemporary man without God is not without risk. This fact happened because the theological affair with philosophy became a necessity - occurred in the era of Thomas Aquinas. He confirmed the need to incorporate Aristotelian philosophical idioms into biblical revelation. The result is 'nature' separated from 'gift'. Nature becomes equal autonomous and does not want to be with grace forever. The same pattern is seen when the youngest child leaves the parent's house too early and the youngest child loses everything.<sup>9</sup> As a result, he experienced a reduction in his value as his father's son and even positioned himself as a wage earner when he was in his lowest position.

Such is the case with Job. He lost the orientation of life in God's grace because of his ignorance of the real God. All this time, Job had only listened to what people said. When in the lowest position, his inner space found the voice of God's revelation to him and how God told him Job: where were you When I created the hippopotamus?<sup>10</sup> The description of such questions reveals the veil of human ignorance through the role of reason which leads him to what the Bible says: ignorant (LAI translates: stupidity). This phrase in Greek uses the word: agnoia – Acts 17 when Paul did theology at the Areopagus pulpit in Athens.

Next, there is a dilemma posed by the problem of eternal dualism-monomism in anthropology: between a dualistic but anti-earthly Platonism that ignores matter, society and history, and an Aristotelianism of unity and worldliness that is uncomfortable with challenging accounts for the immortality

<sup>9</sup> Luke 15:11-32

<sup>10</sup> Job 40:10-19. The complete theological description of God's creation YHWH is given by Job. And Job is not able to provide further reviews because Job was not there when the hippopotamus was made. God YHWH challenges himself as a man who is ready to give an answer. But he didn't. Job closed his mouth.

of the individual. The continuation of the Polarity of being one with God but separated from the material world and history is a naive reality. Withdrawing from the world and living in solitude negates the real reality of life as the lively and lively flock of God's family. The polarity of loving the world fully and not distancing itself from it reflects what the text witnesses in 1 John 2:15-17. being absorbed in the world will end or stop the zeal for doing God's will.

## VI. DIVINITY OF GRACE

The early apostles and the Jerusalem church in Acts were courageous figures in theology. Their theological center is biblical and emphasizes repentance by faith in order to achieve the salvation that God promises. The courage of the apostles shook the established order of the time. Everything in relationship with God, with neighbor and government undergoes a radical change towards fundamental restoration, including in the ownership of wealth. The spirituality of the early church was the result of the work of the Spirit of Jesus which was integrated with the preaching of the Gospel of Grace. As a result, there was a multiplication of God's people both in the number of 3,000 people and 5,000 people later. This is still a male category only. Not surprisingly, beyond the expectations of the apostles, this multiplication itself gave birth to a diaconal department to take care of widows who needed distribution of assistance, especially from Greek-speaking Jews.

One of the chosen deacons also has courage in theology. He was filled with the Holy Spirit and his preaching was straightforward to the point but pierced hard hearts and ears. Because of Stephen's courage, he became a martyr and the next church seed was born, namely the conversion of Saul who would later plant new churches in Asia and Europe. Reflecting on their courage and their projection into the 21st century in concrete terms aligns with this statement, Hans Urs von Balthasar,

'the light shed by Christ is necessary not only to illuminate what is meant by 'person' in terms of vocation and supernatural dignity, but also to show us elements of pre-Christian individuality that have prepared the way for the meaning of 'personal'.'<sup>11</sup>

The Apostles and the early church were able to actualize the value of the gospel of grace into individual values as well as shared values as a community of redemption even though they were in their respective small groups. The divinity of grace is historical in human life and it leads to transformation in the package of life. It begins with metanoia or repentance and undergoes a process of metamorphosis to finally receive God's abundant grace. This is the meaning of the words of Jesus in John 10:10b, the author of John uses the word life in abundance, namely life based on renewed

<sup>11</sup> Von Balthasar, H. U. 1990. "Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, vol. 2: The Dramatis Personae." Man in God. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, pp. 337.

spirituality. The praxis of faith is in the acceptance of Christ's grace – He is the fullness of God!

## VII. DISCUSSION

The two realities of content, namely faith and culture, are closely related to human life, and two practical realities in theology, namely the human being and the grace of God, in the preacher. The nuances of intersect in the world and in theology have been historical. This is similar to the incarnation of Christ. The Word that became flesh is now the living Word that is working on the stage of human civilization so that all are saved and become His children.

However, not everyone believed this news. His theological reality is transcendently how beautiful he is who is willing to proclaim the gospel of peace to nations that are still enveloped in darkness so that light may emerge from him even though his habitus is only dark. That His miraculous grace may be praised (Rom 10;15 ff; 1 Cor 15:10). All because of the sheer grace that called us before the world was created.

The human dimension is adaptation to the context of outreach and grace in preaching is an aspect towards the transformation of the individual to experience a complete restoration in the roots of culture and thought to a way of life that used to be seen as distorted and naked because of the untruth. The same thing with 4.0 and 5G technology leaves room for the sublimation of the values of the gospel so that technological humans remain in relationship with others and with God through joint worship. This legacy must always be echoed.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

The past center of grace in Creation has encouraged, enriched and catalyzed human thought processes, and is still in a position to do so today. The contribution of Christian theology is still significant today. Therefore, 'theology anew' must be in a position to bring to life a broad and rigorous philosophical reflection that is able to recognize and receive the impetus and light of faith in the glory of the risen and living Christ (cf. 1 Cor 15:3-4). And furthermore, theology in this 21st century needs to search generously and creatively in the vast storehouse of human thought, wisdom and culture for the most useful elements and instruments to carry out its essential mission of touching the minds and hearts of all human beings in the name of God. Finally, theology in the 21st century is at least and must speak of the need to rediscover what he calls 'historical self-actualization-the way of life of Jesus Christ... in the midst of the content, the supporting structure of society hidden underground. This is part of the consideration of secularization because of the influence of the 4.0 technological revolution and human interconnection without any more boundaries. Being in the world and with technology but the heart remains eschatological where Christ is in His eternal glory from time

immemorial<sup>12</sup>. Postmodernism society needs content of creation theology and the theology of the finality of Christ's historical Word so that postmodernism people become children of God because the Living Word really rises and lives forever (Hebrews 7:8).

### *Greeting:*

The authors would like to thank the institution that published this article. And our statement in this article is merely a form of concern for humanity in this 21st century which ignores the meaning of grace in individual life and with others. And it is discussed in the context of postmodernism's subjectivity.

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<sup>12</sup> **ya er ywh pan-av eile-xa** - the Lord make his face shine upon you' (Num 6:25). Jesus also prayed similarly to Numbers 6. He prayed in John 17:24