

Sharing On Suffering Experiences As The Secularity Of Incarnation

Antonius Denny Firmanto

Sekolah Tinggi Filsafat Teologi Widya Sasana, Malang, Indonesia

email: rm_deni@yahoo.com

Abstract: The changing context of the Christian life brings Christian life at a crossroads, the first whether to remain in a comfort zone or the second whether to enter into the realm of profane daily life. The urge to get out of selfness and deal with the public world makes the Church deal with questions about its own identity. In this article, I want to explore the question of incarnation in Johan Baptist Metz's secularity. However, the concept of incarnation is applied solely to Jesus Christ as the Divine Word became flesh. Ricoeurian hermeneutics could help explain the term *secularity* on incarnation to immediate. And corporeal suffering of the others. The turn to Ricoeur as a methodological resource for theology provides a philosophical account of the methodology behind critical theology. The article concludes that the human being in their relationship its suffering experience is an experience of encounter.

Keywords: Religion; Critical Theology; Political Theology; Eschatology

Abstrak: Perubahan konteks kehidupan orang kristiani membawa eksistensi kehidupan kristiani di persimpangan jalan pemaknaan, yang pertama apakah orang kristiani akan tetap berada di zona nyaman dalam arti tetap mengartikan hidup kristiani sebagai pelaksanaan ritual keagamaan atau yang kedua apakah orang kristiani akan masuk ke ranah kehidupan sehari-hari yang profan. Studi ini terarah kepada pertanyaan yang kedua karena dorongan untuk keluar dari keegoisan dan berurusan dengan dunia publik. Keengganan tersebut membuat orang Kristiani harus menghadapi pertanyaan tentang identitasnya sendiri yang bersumber dari misteri inkarnasi. Artikel ini mengeksplorasi pertanyaan tentang inkarnasi dalam sekularitas Johan Baptist Metz. Meskipun konsep inkarnasi hanya diterapkan pada Yesus Kristus ketika Sabda Ilahi menjadi daging, hermeneutika Ricoeurian dapat membantu menjelaskan istilah sekularitas pada inkarnasi pada penderitaan langsung dan jasmani orang lain. Peralihan ke Ricoeur sebagai sumber metodologis untuk teologi memberikan penjelasan filosofis tentang metodologi di balik teologi kritis. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa setiap orang akan sampai kepada identitas kemanusiaannya melalui berbagi pengalaman penderitaannya melalui perjumpaan dengan sesamanya.

Kata-kata Kunci: Agama; Teologi Kritis; Teologi Politik; Eskatologi

Introduction

Christian religion lives from the belief that God's presence is experienced in real "events of Jesus Christ" as love. The claim was a scandal and a "stumbling block" (Rom. 9:32) when the proclamation of the presence of God ended in suffering and death of Jesus on the cross. "Cross events" which indicate the existence of grief and suffering are a problem because events that clearly show "failure" are expressed as "hope" by Christians: "Always be prepared to answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Pet. 3:15; (Pattison, 2016)).

Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881) in a novel written in the 19th century entitled *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880) formulated the problem with the question: "How can anyone who believes in God experience pain and suffering in the world?" Ivan Karamazov who became the characters in the novel contends God because he has no power to accept the suffering of a child who is innocent and does not

get justice. The idea of "God" does not mean if the idea does not have its "content" that is meaningful to human life. The evolution of human civilization is a series of human achievements that are getting better from day to day in front of difficulties and suffering (Poljakova, 2017). If the news about the "cross" is not good news for humanity, it is also the news about God who is unable to release Jesus from the cross.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) took the theme "the death of God" as a consequence of the evolution of human cultural civilization. Evolutive civilization is a civilization that gradually stages and purifies according to the dialectical process until finally it is found that where "there" is an autonomous existence. According to Nietzsche, human civilization has reached a stage where it can abandon the idea of God. Nietzsche's statement (in *The Joyful Wisdom*, 1882) that "God is dead! God is still dead! We have eliminated it!" is an expression of the actualization of the peaks of humanity which explains the human identity.

The gloom of the cold war and at the same time the enthusiasm for the unity and independence of nations after World War II in the 1950s continued into the 1960s. During this time, the project to travel to the moon also influenced the atmosphere among theologians in the United States. Secularization rests on the belief that humans are the culmination of all existence. Because of the help of technology, humans can give meaning again or reconstruct their lives. This affects the human perspective on what already exists. Responding to this, Gabriel Vahanian divided periods: the first stage is "pre-Christian", the second stage is "Christian", the third stage is "post-Christian" in *Death of God: The Culture of Our Post-Christian Era* (1961). According to Vahanian, the post-Christian world does not grasp the meaning of mystery, world sacramentality, and divine organization. Furthermore, in *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel: Based on Analysis of Its Language* (1963), Paul van Buren (1924-1998) was convinced that the post-Christian era was centred on "Jesus' ethics". Furthermore, Thomas J. Altizer in *The Gospel of Christian Atheism* (1966) asserts that Jesus' words and deeds are Christian moral authority. Raising these various thoughts, the cover of the April 8, 1966 edition of Time raised the theme *Is God Dead?*

Metz's Secularity

Johann Baptist Metz (1928-2019) was a German Catholic theologian. He was a prisoner of war in World War II (Johann Baptist Metz, 2014). His personal experience dealing with the cruelty of war and the death of his colleagues on the battlefield elevates the meaning of faith which means trust in God. Metz believes that matters of faith are things that arise from one's life experience with their daily problems. Metz believes that secularity that separates between "worldly" institutions and religious institutions that are "heavenly" will cause humans to lose their meaning. Theology must remain connected to history.

Secularity of Human Existence

The secularity causes the word "God" to be used without being accompanied by semantic meaning and the experiential meaning of the community that states the word. The meaning of the word "God" only exists if humans provide a place for the meaningfulness of God for humans in their daily lives. The absence of God causes the meaninglessness of human life where human life is the life that leads to one purpose. The eschatological conversation is the talk of human presence in God's presence. Metz believes that the meaningfulness of human life is in the meaning of God. The future of man is in God.

Christian faith is a historical faith. Therefore, the Christian historicity contributes to the "face of Christian faith". History is the context of the experience of Christian faith, even all things that appear in

a variety of small daily activities. Christians experience the world as “wholeness in the duality of events”, namely: the history of sinfulness as well as the history of salvation. Metz formulates the “Church” as a community that lives in “promises” (J.B. Metz, 1969). The actual church is a community that is on a journey to its finality, which is to enter into the experience of God's complete love (J.B. Metz, 1969). Based on “God is Love” (1 Jn. 4:16), Metz quotes the text 1Jn. 3:14: “We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death” to explain the secularity of the Church (J.B. Metz, 1969). The Church is not a micro-society in a macro-society.

The existence of the Church in the world is facilitating people to be sensitive to the existence of God who invites each person to be involved in the realization of “new heavens and a new earth” (Rev. 21: 1). News about the life of the Church that inspires and frees human life from being shaken so that manifestation reaches its fullness is the Theophany of God (J.B. Metz, 1969). Metz gives meaning to the existence of the Church through expressions of perfectionism (J.B. Metz, 1969). Through this expression, the Church exists to become a taste for the world. Historically in the world, the Church became a “guarantor” who sensed and affirmed the “ways” in which God revealed His presence personally. More explicitly, Metz believes that “the Church exists for the world” (J.B. Metz, 1969).

The Secularity of the Church indicates that “faith” means being in the middle of the world. The desire to “be close to God” can only be realized by meeting the world (J.B. Metz, 1969). By itself, the hope of faith means the journey to the fulfilment of the world by God's purpose, namely that “God be all in all” (1Cor. 15:28). Furthermore, the history of salvation which shows the relational history between God and man contains the history of the relationship of the Church and the world. Experience as a “foreign being” in a world loaded with problems is not the experience of the Church. On the contrary, the historical reality of the life of the Church is that the Church is a sign and means that continues to the present in the complexity of the world (J.B. Metz, 1969).

The Meaning of Time

The secularity as a *locus theologicus* is a consciousness of life in the world (Johann Baptist Metz, 2014). Metz is not directing attention to secularism, which means the separation between spiritual values and physical or worldly and heavenly values. Secularity Metz raises the realization that Church history is not a sacred history in a profane world. Church history is the daily life of believers who try to give meaning or display the accentuation of what is lived. Although the thoughts stemming from the Christian tradition that has been out of the public domain since the enlightenment, Christians must not allow themselves to live in a closed sphere. Christian egocentrism threatens his identity. Praxis of daily life must be the starting point of theology.

The present world is no longer centred on the past but into the future. If the existence of God is functionally interpreted, in the past, God had a role as a place of escape for humans when faced with many problems. On the contrary in the present, when humans are established and sufficient, the functional view of God becomes experienced by humans as “breaking up” the relationship between humans and their bodies is an important point when humans answer God's call. Metz described the “dead” experience with the story of Abraham, who left his passages for “new heavens and a new earth” by God's call (J.B. Metz, 1969).

Metz mentions the practice of love for others as an expression of “courage” which overcomes the fear of death. Togetherness and participation in the life experiences of others, especially the most

excluded fellow is an anticipatory experience from “death” to “life” (cf. 1Jn 3:14; (J.B. Metz, 1969). With that belief, the experience of “new heavens and a new earth” which is the hope of Christians is in the experience of love directed toward others. Solidarity with others is an effort to always be aware that death is in the experience of love for God shown in the experience of love for others: “And Christ died for all, so that those who live, no longer live for themselves, but for Him, who died and was raised for them” (2 Cor 5:15). In this case, “following in the footsteps of Christ” means “living for others” as the content of “Christian hope” (J.B. Metz, 1969).

Method

The study applied Ricoeurian method by thinking critical theological expression as imaginative (Ricoeur, 1998). Based on his observation of symbols that simultaneously revive archaic expressions and anticipate the future of infinite possibility, the imaginative means that experiences of critical theologians' audiences are expressed through the symbols, terminologies, and prayers in communicating their message of crisis (Myatt, 2013). It is referred as a metaphor (Ricoeur, 1979).

Ricoeur moved beyond a consideration of the form (word/semiotics) and sense (sentence/semantics) of metaphor to consideration of metaphor's referential function as the power to redescribe reality (Ricoeur, 1996). It comes from Ricoeur's definition of language is “saying something to someone about something” (Myatt, 2013). By narrating, a person engages the productive imagination to draw from the manifold of events the unity of one temporal whole (Myatt, 2013; Ricoeur, 1980). A metaphor exemplifies the human capacity to discern and create new meaning. Metaphor connects the dots, constructs a plot, and communicate it in a way that an audience will hear and understand even if that understanding is initially accompanied by shock or rejection (Ricoeur, 1986).

The narrative function of critical theology is not complete until it is received or appropriated in a world (Gerhart, 1975). In Ricoeur's words, appropriation “marks the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader” (Ricoeur, 1980). Analogous to the mutually constitutive interaction between narrative and temporality, creativity and traditionality, and even self-reflection and explanation (Ricoeur, 1980), narration and appropriation embody a mutually constitutive dialectic. “It is the act of reading that accompanies the narrative's configuration and actualizes its capacity to be followed. To follow a story is to actualize it by reading it” (Ricoeur, 1980). Ricoeur posits that reading fulfils the text in present speech. To read is to conjoin the discourse of the text with the discourse of the present in which the text is received. To the degree that a text represents a singular moment in a particular conversation (immediately distanced from that conversation in the act of writing), that text finds its fulfilment, indeed the renewal of the dialogue from which it was born, in its reception (Ricoeur, 1998).

In the very constitution of the text, one finds an original capacity for renewal which is its open character. Interpretation is the concrete outcome of conjunction and renewal. The text may only be interpreted through the detour of the reader's world; but, to the degree that the textual world is distinct from that of the reader, the latter is confronted by a new way of being-in-the-world (Ricoeur, 1973, 1986). A willingness to listen to and appropriate others' stories accompanies a life that is aware of others. On the other side of this interpretational detour, the reading subject achieves a new sense of self, a new subjectivity informed by this confrontation. In theological terms, it is called as confronting an eschatological moment, during which the past of the believer merges into their future. To the degree that critical theologians facilitate such eschatological moments of awareness and conversion in their respective communities, they exemplify authentically symbolic religious expression, thus returning our

reflection to its initial point of departure . The simultaneously archaeological and teleological identity of symbolic expression finds an analogous unity in critical theologies goading ecclesial publics into the future (Ricoeur, 1998). Juxtaposing known and unknown by way of dialogue as an insistence on biographical theology, critical theologies unify past and present and thus excite a sense of imagination in communities that tend otherwise to remain comfortable in the eternal return of the same.

Findings and Discussion

Shared Suffering Experiences as a Text

Being Human as the Suffering

Metz argues that humans are not headed for the duality of the *ultimus naturalis* (= natural finish) and *ultimus supernaturalis* (= supernatural finish) separately. Humans only recognize a single finality, namely “the future promised by God” (J.B. Metz, 1969). God is He who will come. He came to a completely new state. He allowed that the Christians have an opportunity to turn the history of this world into a history of salvation through re-creation: “By His promise, we wait for the new heaven and the new earth” (2Pet 3:13). Therefore, experience in time is an eschatological experience where the present time is a time directed towards the future that causes every Christian to be always ready (Johann Baptist Metz, 2014). According to Metz, God requires every Christian to be committed to making this world better. “Our eschatological hope is not in the form of a heavenly-earthly Jerusalem, a city promised by God, which is ready to be available and already exists ... The City of God is eschatological manifesting that is built by our hope. We are workers who are building the future, not just interpreting the future” (J.B. Metz, 1969).

The hope of the future is based on the certainty of faith in the relationship with God today (Johann Baptist Metz, 1992). The basis of hope is faith in Yahweh who declares himself to be a living God in a community that believes in Jesus of Nazareth. The incarnation mystery shows God's “openness” to the world. By accepting the incarnation, God accepts the “world” in Him. “World” means a man with all of his experiences (J.B. Metz, 1969). In God, history becomes the history of God “who is with us” (J.B. Metz, 1969). God accompanies the Church as a community of God who is taking “exodus”. It is a journey out of selfness to unity with God (J.B. Metz, 1969). Unity with God is revealed through the Church’s response to the suffering of others (J. Metz, 2001).

Shared Suffering Experiences

Metz asserts that the existence of others or presence among others is the location or *topos* (= *locus*, Latin) of the numinous experience (= theophany experience/ God's self-revelation) (J.B. Metz, 1969). Openness and caution to experience encounter with others is an anticipatory manifestation of the desire to welcome the day of the Lord.

The experience of “being close to God” is in a shared experience with others. With this understanding, Metz emphasized that the Christian faith is not just an abstract or ideological idea. Christian faith is an experience of “encounter.” The growth of Christian faith occurs in encounters with God who becomes human in the words, works, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Johann Baptist Metz & Ashley, 1994).

Metz calls the encounter experience as the frontier experience of the eschatological period (J.B. Metz, 1969). Together with the statement, Metz quoted the text: “whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God” (1 Cor 3: 22-23) and “For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3: 3).

“Time” in the Relational Encounter

The meaning of the word *eschata* (Greek) is “the last things” (J.B. Metz, 1969). In the context of the meaning of the word, Eschatology means the study of the last things in “later” nuances, namely: death, judgment, purgatory, heaven, hell, and the second coming of Christ. At that time, God acted to reward and punish those who deserved it. The impression of this frame of mind is that Eschatology is a “peripheral” conversation. Whereas according to Metz, Eschatology “determines, shapes, and gives meaning to every theological statement, especially concerning the world” (J.B. Metz, 1969). The understanding of “time” is the basis of Metz's understanding. Metz shows two different models of thinking that are the basis of Christianity, namely: the Judeo-Christian model and the Hellenism model.

The meaning of the word “time” in Judeo-Christian thinking is in the framework of God's “presence”. The creation story in the first chapter of Genesis describes humans as the culmination of creation. “The image and likeness” of God in human existence shows the relational potentiality between God and humans. Then, the second story in the second chapter of Genesis shows human identity as the centre of creation that requires the relational presence of “flesh from my flesh” (Gen. 2:23). In both stories, “the world” is in “God's time” because the world is manifested according to God's promise (J.B. Metz, 1969). By itself, by living in the “time of God”, the people of Israel set their sights on fulfilling the “promise” (J.B. Metz, 1969). Therefore, God's statement in the experience of the biblical leaders is not just information, but a statement about the existence or presence of “the future”. This makes solidarity among the Israelites occur because of unity in looking at God's promises. Solidarity contains the belief that the inhabited world is not the promised land that God will give them. The Israelites understood themselves as walking towards a “new” where “the new as the never was” (J.B. Metz, 1969). In this context, “time” is an experience present in the presence of God; history is linear until it reaches its fulfilment.

The meaning of the word “time” in the Hellenistic perspective is in the idea of the cosmos, where “time” (= *chronos*) exists in cosmic order after disorder (= *chaos*) is defeated (J.B. Metz, 1969). In this order, history is cyclical: “Whatever was will be there again, and what has ever been made will be made again; there is nothing new under the sun” (Eccl. 1: 9). Whatever will be in the future is a memory of what is in the present. Based on these two differences, Metz emphasizes the meaning of history not just “the sequence of time” according to the Hellenism perspective, but rather about the “promise to manifest” in the hopes of the Israelites (Losada-Sierra & Mandalios, 2015). In this case, the creation story in the book of Genesis is not a matter of how “heaven and earth” were created but about “promises” about “the new heaven and earth”. According to Metz, Moses' experience in God's presence when God revealed Himself as “I am who I am” (Ex. 3:14) is a face-to-face experience with the future. The future contains “unpredictability” which indeed belongs to the future itself (J.B. Metz, 1969). It shows human potentiality that can be anything in the future.

Human potential is “hope”. Hope is a creative expectancy which is the basis for every Christian to look at his daily life in the world as an event of faith (J.B. Metz, 1969). The “time” of a Christian is not

quantitative accumulation or addition, but a qualitative “experience” that gives meaning to life with Jesus. An existence with Jesus is an eschatological existence because the events of “the resurrection of Jesus” confirm that the end of the Christian journey is “not far away” (cf. Mark 12:34).

Metz believes that small and trivial things become a means to meet face-to-face and establish contact with humans which is a manifestation of the world (Johann Baptist Metz, 2014). The personal contact of the Church with humans is a basic condition for finding God in the life of the world. As a consequence of the mystery of the incarnation, God is in the ways of men who experience the ups and downs of life. Deterioration and suffering is not an excuse in front of “the day of the Lord” (J.B. Metz, 1969).

The novelty displayed at the “Lord's Day” in Metz's idea is a novelty that cannot be anticipated or previously assumed (J.B. Metz, 1969). Metz brings the picture expressed by Paul: “What the eye has never seen, and never heard by the ear, and which never arises in the heart of man: all that God provides for those who love Him” (1 Cor. 2: 9) However, this idea does not indicate that the “new heaven and a new earth” are (= being) without history or free from humanity. The novelty is that there is (= being) who always moves to “become” or “manifest” in the dynamics of the faith of the historical Christian life.

Metz calls the Christian a “formator” (J.B. Metz, 1969) or “initiator” of “new heaven and a new earth” which is coming into being, but at the same time already (J.B. Metz, 1969). In the context of the becoming, Metz raised the idea of the “seed of death” which was sown in human life according to the text 1 Cor. 15: 43-44. Because human life is not for themselves but God, death is a kenosis event of human love before God (J.B. Metz, 1969). The death as an event is experienced by humans as “breaking up” relations between humans and their bodies are important points when humans answer God's call. Metz described the “dead” experience with the story of Abraham, who left his passages for “new heavens and a new earth” by God's call (J.B. Metz, 1969): “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going” (Heb. 11: 8).

Metz mentions the practice of love for others as an expression of “courage” which overcomes the fear of death. Togetherness and participation in the life experiences of others, especially the most excluded fellow is an anticipatory experience from “death” to “life” (cf. 1 Jn 3:14; (J.B. Metz, 1969). With that belief, the experience of “new heavens and a new earth” which is the hope of Christians is in the experience of love directed toward others (Johann Baptist Metz & Ashley, 1994). Solidarity with others is an effort to always be aware that death is in the experience of love for God shown in the experience of love for others: “And Christ died for all, so that those who live, no longer live for themselves, but for Him, who died and was raised for them “(2 Cor 5:15). In this case, “following in the footsteps of Christ” means “living for others” as the content of “Christian hope” (J.B. Metz, 1969).

The Meaning of Being Historical Christian

A Consciousness on Time

Text of John 2: 4 takes the theme “time” of Jesus with the statement: “My time has not yet come”. Jesus “time” became a theological problem because in Jesus' “time” God revealed His existence. Many Christians see eschatological events as something anticipated or something that awaits their arrival. Life as a Christian is an eschatological life (Marsden, 2012). The aim of the life of an early Christian is not

to become a member of a church organization but to believe. The Christian commitment to the realization of a peaceful society and Christian injustice is experienced in the secular world. This secular world is a place of Christian worship. The Christian does not run away from the world into the Church's ritual. The world is a place of God's presence. In this earthly "place of worship" God is glorified in the words Irenaeus of Lyons: *Gloria Dei est homo vivens* (= the glory of God is in the dignity of human life (Newheiser, 2016).

The glory of God is a living human being; human life is looking at God. If the revelation of God through creation can give life to all those who live on earth, how much more does the statement of the Father through the Word that should give life to those who see God. The ultimate goal of creation is that God "Creator finally becomes 'all in all'" (1 Cor 15:28) by working on His glory and at the same time our happiness. Talking about God also means talking about humans. Religion as the reality of human life in the world also plays a role in major changes in the world. Also, the planning of technology and sciences plays an important role in building the world and creating prosperity.

The Suffering Experience that is Considered as Community's Experience

The authenticity of understanding of who God comes from the answers of humans who experience suffering and question the existence of God (Henson, 1999). Therefore, a theologian is tasked with offering answers to those around him. In this case, according to Metz, theology must speak concretely to its audience. Therefore, Metz proposed changes in theology of affirmative nature to hermeneutical nature. In this case, a theologian is a believer who facilitates fellow companions in the exodus towards God to be able to provide relevant responses to God's call in his faith (Volf, 2007).

Anamnesis, or memory of the misery of Christ and the history of human suffering, is the memory of God's history in relation with human being (Tillar, 2003). In the biblical sense of history, memory (*zikkaron*, Hebrew) is not just a matter of reminding ourselves of what happened in the past. *Anamnesis* is the return to the past with eyes to act in the present. God "reminded himself" of his saving actions that he had carried out. The Christian community has an ethical orientation based on the belief that heavenly things from the future must be realized in history (Tillar, 2003).

In this case, it should be remembered what Pope Francis told the participants of the international peace conference in Cairo (28 April 2017): the nature of man and woman and openness. In this case, Pope Francis brings a new understanding of ecclesiology, namely: 1) the duty to respect one's identity and that of others, 2) the courage to accept the difference, and 3) sincere of intentions.

In response to the widespread slogan "God is dead" in the United States, Eberhard Jungel argued that the events of Jesus are the focal point of the Christian experience of God. God's events "dead" cannot be separated from the context of the incarnation. Jungel wrote a paper entitled *The Death of Living God* (1968), in which he argued that, through the death of Christ, God was involved in "pervasive abilities" or "temporary" human life who is drawn into eternal life. Jungel developed this idea in *God as the Mystery of the World* (1983). He saw the theme "the death of God" as an important affirmation of God's identification with the suffering of this mortal world.

In developing related ideas in his crucified God, Jürgen Moltmann spoke of "death in God". God identifies with all who suffer and die. With that action, God enters various human sufferings and deaths (Wyk, 2015). These aspects of human history are thus raised in the history of God. "Recognizing God on the cross of Christ ... means recognizing the cross, inevitable suffering, death, and rejection of hope in God." Moltmann emphasizes this belief by using poignant episodes of Elie Wiesel's famous novel

Night, which describes the execution at Auschwitz. When many people witness three people die by hanging, someone asks “Where is God?”

Moltmann uses the bitter situation above to emphasize that through the cross of Christ, God felt and was influenced by death. God knows what death is like. This is the past and present and future Christian God. God is not an eternal that cannot be changed, not an absolute unrelated one that exists, which will and will always be the same from eternity. God is He who has made the future of the world His time (Moltmann, 2016).

Incarnation as an Experience of a Person who is in Relation

Practical testimonies about the Church involved in the world appear in liturgical celebrations. The word “liturgy” means first a “consecrated work” together. In this context, the liturgy is no longer in the interest of God but for the sake of humanity itself. Through liturgical expression. Christians try to build an ecclesial community that produces a world that is compatible with human life.

Early Christians were known as infidels by their contemporaries because they did not have an altar to worship Christian God. For Christians, their bodies are an altar to God. Paul writes that human life is a sacrifice received by God (cf. Rom. 12:1). In Semitic languages, the word “life” means a bodily experience. Man is with other people in the world and the world is also the place of the temple of the Spirit. Through global life, people glorify God as stated by Paul “that is your true worship” (Rom. 12: 1).

The Eucharistic celebration is a service that celebrates life . Based on the meaning of the word *agape* which becomes the initial designation for the celebration of the Eucharist, eating together for the glory of God is placed in togetherness with others and also with the world. Love for God manifests in love for humans and the world. Christian love cannot be separated from “worship that celebrates life”. Without “going into the middle of the market”, the Christian Eucharist will be tasteless because liturgical rituals will be an ideological superstructure without any basis in life. Liturgical prayers are not a *mantra* whose effectiveness depends on the prayers' accuracy or obedience in the literal pronunciation of liturgical prayers. Liturgical celebrations that only emphasize the “later” aspect and do not rest on the history of the world where eschatological expectations are “in progress” are a feast that has no impact.

Liturgical celebrations celebrate life sanctified by God who becomes human. The passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus show the mystery of life which is celebrated by the Church because God is the God of the living. The Christian God is “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living” (Matt. 22:32). Without involvement in daily life and spiritual offerings in the form of work, effort, or struggle for everyday life, the offerings delivered to the altar are meaningless.

The Eucharist is the sacrament of those who are walking towards the Promised Land (= the sacrament of the Exodus). The Eucharist strengthens the oppressed to continue walking towards the final destination. Christians celebrate the Eucharist in anticipation of “the presence of Jesus” until his return. Later, when He comes again, the Eucharist is unity with God. Christians must return to the idea of the Eucharist as a celebration of love where “God is love” (1 Jn. 4: 8). Thus, the relational encounter that takes place in the Eucharist is an anticipation of the experience of God which is the finality of Christian hope.

Christian secularity is related to human experience and its various forms (Dotolo, 2002). The historical situation where the structure of human life is formed to shape the future of humans. In this

case, God is not the person left behind, but the future of humans. God is related to the future of mankind and humanity as a whole. God as He who is to come, God is the future of mankind. God is no longer something else like in the past, but something completely new. God who is He created a new human future. He showed Himself as God in Jesus Christ.

Faith in God who will come in a completely new being is not manifested in the act of “waiting”, but in the active action of “today”. This eschatological expectation is not passively waiting, but an attempt to play a role in all forms of human objects. Christians must be committed to planning the development of a human community (Marsden, 2012). It should be driven by a continuous search for human values.

This new concept of God does not mean rejecting the fact that humans are in contact with God now and here (Newheiser, 2016). The hope of the future is based on the certainty of faith in the relationship with God today. The basis of hope is faith in Yahweh who declares himself to be a living God in the community and faith in Jesus of Nazareth. He allowed that each person has an opportunity to change this world becomes a history of salvation through re-creation. He made every person new people who die to sin. Finally, He made every person committed to making this world better.

The core teachings of Jesus' death and resurrection can be the basis for building humanity. With this, Christians fight human despair. God's kingdom is being formed in the human world. The kingdom of God can also be called the kingdom of justice and love, where there is no more oppression and contention. This hope voiced the message: “By His promise, we wait for the new heaven and new earth” (2Pet. 3:13). This hope is a gift so Christians who live in suffering do not complain and despair (Manik, 2021).

Conclusion

The situation has influenced modern theologians in their theological reflection on human beings in their relationship with God. First. The talk of eschatology is the talk of human existence, value, and meaning. To the extent that eschatology is related to various forms of human experience, eschatology is anthropological. Eschatology is a human experience that looks at him and his future in his relationship with God.

Second. Secularity of incarnation promises something better. It will replace what is already established. It proposes Metz's idea that states the function of the Church. The Church should give a taste to society. This function can only be achieved wholly present in the world. Through the experience in which God speaks, the Church enters into the world and history. Each Christian is a translator of His call to the society.

Third. There is a relationship between the activity of faith directed at the future and efforts to improve the world. The life of the Church, with liturgy, sacraments, and the proclamation of the Word, is necessary to develop eschatological hopes and strengthen and celebrate those hopes in their hopeful community. It brings this hope to the world to become a new creation.

References

- Dotolo, C. (2002). Cristianesimo e filosofia nella riflessione di J.B. Metz. *Filosofia e Teologia*, 3, 495–509.
- Gerhart, M. (1975). Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Theory as Resource for Theological Reflection. *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 39(3), 496–527.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/tho.1975.0053>

- Henson, J. (1999). The Church in the Context of Political Theology: The Ecclesiology of Johann Baptist Metz. *Landas: Journal of Loyola School of Theology* 13(2), 48-77.
- Losada-Sierra, M., & Mandalios, J. (2015). A Time for the Marginal: Levinas and Metz on Biblical Time. *The Heythrop Journal*, 56, 411–423.
- Manik, R. P. (2021). Polemik Antara Original Event dan Original Purpose dalam Liturgi. *Studia Philosophica et Theologica*, 21(1), 82–96.
- Marsden, J. (2012). The Political Theology of Johannes Baptist Metz. *Heythrop Journal - Quarterly Review of Philosophy and Theology*, 53(3), 440–452. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2265.2010.00623.x>
- Metz, J. (2001). Il cristianesimo nel pluralismo delle religioni e delle culture. *Studia Patavina: Rivista Di Scienze Religiose*, 48(2), 255–268.
- Metz, J.B. (1969). *Theology of the World*. London: Herder and Herder.
- Metz, Johann Baptist. (1992). Suffering from God: Theology as Theodicy. *Pacifica: Australasian Theological Studies*, 5(3), 274–287. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1030570x9200500303>
- Metz, Johann Baptist. (2014). Facing the World: A Theological and Biographical Inquiry. *Theological Studies*, 75(1), 23–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0040563914520919>
- Metz, Johann Baptist, & Ashley, J. M. (1994). Suffering Unto God. *Critical Inquiry*, 20(4), 611–622. <https://doi.org/10.1086/448730>
- Moltmann, J. (2016). The Future of Theology. *Ecumenical Review*, 68(1), 3–13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/erev.12198>
- Myatt, W. (2013). Tradition and Innovation. Paul Ricoeur and the Dynamics of Critical Theology. *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 74(4), 329–342. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21692327.2014.888957>
- Newheiser, D. (2016). The Secularization of Hope The Secularization of Hope. *Political Theology*, 17:2(June), 117–119. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1462317X.2016.1134190>
- Pattison, G. (2016). Hope. *Political Theology*, 17(2), 199–205. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1462317X.2016.1161305>
- Poljakova, E. (2017). Fyodor Dostoevsky and Friedrich Nietzsche: Power/weakness. *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 78(1–2), 121–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21692327.2016.1249015>
- Ricoeur, P. (1973). The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text. *New Literary History*, 5(1), 91. <https://doi.org/10.2307/468410>
- Ricoeur, P. (1979). The Human Experience of Time and Narrative. *Research in Phenomenology*, 9, 17–34.
- Ricoeur, P. (1980). Narrative Time. *Narrative and Media*, 169–190. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511811760.005>
- Ricoeur, P. (1986). *Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator*. 121–132. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-4454-1_9
- Ricoeur, P. (1996). Memory, Forgetfulness, and History. *Iyyun: The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly*, 45, 13–24.
- Ricoeur, P. (1998). Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination. *Pro Ecclesia: A Journal of Catholic and Evangelical Theology*, 7(3), 371–372. <https://doi.org/10.1177/106385129800700314>
- Tillar, E. K. (2003). Critical Remembrance and Eschatological Hope in Edward Schillebeeckx's Theology of Suffering for Others. *Heythrop Journal - Quarterly Review of Philosophy and Theology*, 44(1), 15–42. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2265.t01-1-00212>
- Volf, M. (2007). Memory, Eschatology, Eucharist. *Liturgy*, 22(1), 27–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/04580630600993194>
- Wyk, T. Van. (2015). Political Theology as Critical Theology. *HTS Teologiese Studies*, 71(3), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v71i3.3026>