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Ecclesiology Model in Asian Public Theology

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Abstract

This article attempted to answer the problem formulation, how does the model of ecclesiology based on Asian public theology? Based on this problem formulation, this article aimed to discuss Felix Wilfred's views on Asian public theology, ecclesiological model that is relevant to the perspective of Asian public theology, and the practical implications of the idea on Asian public theology for Church pastoral work. Using a literature study approach, the author attempted to read and explore several of Wilfred's important works on Asian public theology. The result showed that public theology moves outward and opens itself up (inclusive) to meet, embrace and collaborate with others outside the Christian community. Wilfred's Asian public theology perspective always comes from concrete situations, so it is often referred to as subaltern theology.

Keywords: contextual; inclusive; marginal; pastoral; post-colonial

INTRODUCTION

Since liberation theology from America Latin took on a definitive form and began to be published and spread widely, its influence began to spread to various parts of the world with their respective contexts. Asia, which is part of the third world, does not escape the significance of liberation theology. When the influence of liberation theology reached Asia, Asian theology was in the process of moving towards theological independence. With methodological contributions from Latin American theology, theologians in various regions are challenged to find theological methods that are contextual to people's life situations.

Third world theologians strive to build a theology that is attuned to the Asian public context namely Asian public theology. Historically, the term public theology was first used by Martin Marty in 1974 to respond to Robert Bellah's concept of civil religion in the context of the United States. Bellah describes a national philosophy that uses some language and religious symbols but is not sectarian. In the Durkheimian tradition, Bellah considers civil religion to provide social cohesion within the nation's

diverse immigrant groups. Marty wants to clarify the task of public theology and further differentiate public theology from civil religious constructs.¹

The term "public theology" was later adopted by David Tracy in his book entitled "the Analogical Imagination, Christian Theology, and the Culture of Pluralism" which was published in 1981. In this book, Tracy wants theologians to escape from particularity through public theological discourse that articulates religious truth claims.² The perspective of public theology invites the Church to remove theology from the tendency to privatize faith. This means that theology must be sensitive to public issues and build discourse about public discourses. Public discourse and experience can be a source and locus of theology. In this way, public theology becomes a form of practical theology that not only reflects God but connects God with the reality of public life so that bad practices can be revised.³

David Tracy explains three categories of public in the context of public theology, namely society, academy, and church. First, society, in Tracy's understanding, includes three important domains, namely the

¹ Katie Day and Sebastian Kim, "Introduction," in *Companion to Public Theology*, ed. Sebastian Kim and Katie Day (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 1-21.

² David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*

(New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981).

³ Mark J. Cartledge, "Can Theology Be 'Practical'?" Part I: A Discussion of Theory, Practice, Wisdom, Spirituality and Context," *Journal of Empirical Theology* 1, no. 3 (2017): 5-19.

techno-economic domain, the political domain, and the cultural domain. Second, the academy describes the social *locus* in which theological study takes place. Third, the church is a moral and religious community where theologians implement theological teachings.⁴

Felix Wilfred tries to build public theology according to the Asia's context. The main problem discussed by Wilfred in several of his articles is the contextual reality of Asian society as a foundation for developing a theological style that is targeted at responding to the context. Wilfred proposed a style of public theology for the context of Asian society. Wilfred attempts to explain the role of Asian public theology. Asian public theology became a new style of theology as well as an opposition to traditional theology. Traditional theology focuses on the internal affairs of the Christian community, while public theology moves outward and opens itself up (inclusive) to meet, embrace, and collaborate with others outside the Christian community.

The Asian context, which is characterized by cultural plurality, religious pluralism, poverty problems, and environmen-

tal problems, has become a source of theology. Theological reflection is developed not in an abstract condition, but in a real condition with certain opportunities and challenges. Since the Second Vatican Council, theology has been structured in such a way that it becomes more and more responsive to the challenges of the modern world.⁵ In this context, according to Wilfred, the task of theology is not just to defend and communicate the truth of faith, but to make faith more rooted in the context and open to dialogue with the context.⁶ In this way, theology has a public dimension. Theological publicity appears in an effort to build a comprehensive analysis of public issues that can never be separated from the ideals of the realization of the Kingdom of God in the world.

RESEARCH METHOD

This article was written using a qualitative method with a literature study approach. With this method, data is collected from various sources such as articles, books, documents, newspapers, policies, and various results of previous research or studies and then analyzed.

⁴ David Tracy, "Revisionist Practical Theology and the Meaning of Public Discourse," *Pastoral Psychology* 26, no. 2 (1977): 83–94, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01759804>.

⁵ Yohanes Hans Monteiro, Jean Loustar Jewadut, and Roberthus Gaga Nae, "Memoria Passionis Dalam Perayaan Ekaristi Sebagai Dasar Pengembangan

Teologi Migrasi," *DUNAMIS: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristiani* 9, no. 2 (2025): 857–76, <https://doi.org/10.30648/dun.v9i2.1525>.

⁶ Yohanes Hans Monteiro et al., "Pendidikan Calon Imam Di Flores Dalam Paradigma Misi Inter Gentes," *Jurnal Ledalero* 23, no. 2 (2024): 163–83, <https://doi.org/10.31385/jl.v23i2.588.163-183>.

The discussion in this article begins with a description of the background of Felix Wilfred's thinking which focuses on the Asian context as a theological source for him. By using the Asian context as a theological source, Wilfred gave birth to the idea of Asian public theology. Wilfred's ideas about Asian public theology reinforce the discourse and praxis of Church synodality. Just as public theology flaps its *ad extra* wings to analyze and reflect on public issues, the synodality of the Church must also move outwards to respond to concrete problems in the lives of the people. With the perspective of public theology, the reach of the Church's synodality has become wider, not only strengthening internal fraternity, but also strengthening cross-border fraternity. Furthermore, Wilfred's ideas about public theology have implications for the pastoral work of the Church, including criticism of clerical feudalism, the establishment of participatory and contextual pastoral, and the pursuit of pastoral diakonia.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Felix Wilfred Thought Background

In his presentation, Wilfred put forward five factors for the emergence of Asian theological perspectives and insights.⁷ First,

the national independence of Asian countries is independence by opposing the power of colonial nations. The idea of liberation that was disseminated was able to attract the sympathy of the masses and leaders to get involved in this struggle. The struggle for national independence is based on strength that comes from the original resources and traditions of the people, as well as their past history. The liberation movements pursued in the anti-colonial struggles that took place in various Asian countries, each in its own way, became a common starting point for building the theological discourse of Asian society.

Second, Asian countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and the Pakistan in the post-independence period confronted dictatorial-repressive regimes. The people's tireless struggle to achieve freedom and experience a healthy democracy created a new atmosphere marked by dynamic alignment in the people's liberation struggle.

Third, a grassroots voluntary movement that raises specific issues at the local level to fight for liberation from oppressive and unfair practices. These groups are struggling rapidly to combat a situation of growing economic inequality, social discrimination, and political marginalization of weaker sec-

⁷ Felix Wilfred, "Asian Theological Ferment (For Doing Theology in Contemporary Indonesia: Interdisciplinary Perspectives)," *International Journal*

of Indonesian Philosophy & Theology 1, no. 2 (2021): 73–90, <https://doi.org/10.47043/ijipth.v1i2.11>.

tions of Asian society. There has been active involvement of grassroots communities initiating radical social transformation. These groups emerged for a variety of reasons among them the betrayal of Asian states' promises in the early postcolonial period to promote justice and equality, and general disillusionment with state development policies.

Fourth, another critical force is the rise of subaltern groups, marginalized communities, and ethnic and linguistic minorities within South and Southeast Asian countries. The rise of this group's movement demands legitimate rights by using democratic means to the involvement of violence and militancy to achieve political freedom and cultural autonomy. An example that can be brought up in this phenomenon is tribal movements such as the movement *Jharkhand* and *Dalit* in India, *Suiheisha* for the liberation of Japanese exiles (*Burakumin*), and the long and bloody Tamil conflict, as well as their legitimate rights and autonomy in Sri Lanka.

Fifth, rereading of history – cultural, religious, social, and political – of groups *subaltern*. The main reason for the rereading of the group's history *subaltern*, these backward castes and classes are willing to reclaim their heritage as well as their distinct historical and social identities. One

example is the ongoing debate about the nature of Hinduism in India. While the upper castes and classes want to see Hinduism as the all-encompassing cultural and religious reality of India, forming the basis of its political unity, it is precisely the marginalized people who have emerged to maintain that what in recent centuries has been known as Hinduism, is essentially an amalgamation of many traditions and indigenous religious traditions belonging to tribes and many oppressed peoples.

Asian Public Theology According to Felix Wilfred

Religion must have a strong theological foundation for its efforts in preaching the Gospel and working on the work of liberation. According to Wilfred, the task of theology is not just studying propositions or interpretations of faith. The essence of this theology is what Wilfred uses to determine a suitable method for Asian theology, namely a dialogue method oriented towards transformation. This means that Asian theology is not only tasked with communicating the truth of faith but must be able to dialogue with the wider world. Openness to dialogue with the wider world makes public theology a cross-border theology.⁸ Public theology leads the Church to the courage to act *ad*

⁸ Wilfred.

extra. With *ad extra*, the church must direct its attention to social matters and in turn must also ask itself what it can contribute to company from the perspective of his faith.⁹ In carrying out dialogue methods that must be oriented towards transformation, theology cannot work alone. The approach that must be used is an interdisciplinary approach.¹⁰ When theology interacts with other scientific disciplines, theology will be able to make a significant contribution to life.

To help understand the meaning of public theology, Wilfred differentiates public theology from several other forms of theology. First, differences between theology for life and public theology. From a methodological perspective, in theology for public life, theology has been created and then applied in public life. Even though they talk about issues in the world outside the Church, they are all made for internal consumption by the Church. This can be explained significantly by the fact that clericalization theology views the problems that

occur among the people from the perspective of the clergy. The solution is to ground de-clericalization theology: theology will no longer build discourse according to what is conditioned by the clerical world but will truly become a discourse about God in his relationship with the world. In contrast to theology for life, public theology seeks to build a comprehensive analysis of public issues always in relationship with other parties based on the nature of the Kingdom of God which has no boundaries (all-encompassing or inclusive).¹¹

Second, public theology is related to but different from liberation theology. The motivation for liberation praxis used by liberation theology is rooted in the Christian faith and the methodology and analytical tools are generally Marxian in nature.¹² Public theology incorporates the concerns of liberation theology, but its approach is much more comprehensive and its premises lie in a type of religious relationship and the common good.¹³ Liberation is in a sense the

⁹ Armada Riyanto, "Berteologi Di Ruang Inklusif, 'Sayap' Metodologi Felix Wilfred," in *Teologi Publik, Sayap, Metodologi, Dan Praksis*, ed. Armada Riyanto (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2021), 40.

¹⁰ Daniel Franklin E. Pilario, "Interdisciplinary Perspectives and Approaches in Theologizing in Asia," *International Journal of Indonesian Philosophy & Theology* 1, no. 1 (2020): 27–40, <https://doi.org/10.47043/ijipth.v1i1.4>.

¹¹ Wilfred, "Asian Theological Ferment (For Doing Theology in Contemporary Indonesia: Interdisciplinary Perspectives)."

¹² Jean Loustar Jewadut, Urbanus Gara, and Jimmy Yohanes Hironimus, "Kontribusi Teologi Pembebasan Bagi Feminisme Di Asia: Sebuah Kajian Kritis," *JPAK: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Katolik* 24, no. 1 (2024): 15–36, <https://doi.org/10.34150/jpak.v24i1.675>.

¹³ Wilfred, "Asian Theological Ferment (For Doing Theology in Contemporary Indonesia: Interdisciplinary Perspectives)."

goal implied by God's Word. This goal requires people to redefine the state of society and use tools to dismantle it all a form of oppression and restraint. On that basis, public theology is an attempt to construct new methods that relate to problems and questions with a multi-science approach. As a consequence, past theology needs to be revised holistically in the context of globalization and scientific developments that are very different from previous times.

Wilfred developed Asian public theology by focusing on the relationship between religion and the common good. According to Wilfred, the concept of religion in Asia is different from the concept of religion in the West. In Asia, religion is not only seen as a set of beliefs or doctrines, but rather as a way of life that must be involved in the context of public life.¹⁴ Wilfred asked a challenging question about the relationship between Christianity as a minority religion and the majority religion in Asia. The key question is: should Christianity as a minority religion be considered equal to the majority religious tradition and therefore worthy of participating in the pursuit of the public good? In this case, it is important to uphold democratic principles that recognize

the equal rights of all citizens to participate. However, in the face of these democratic principles, Wilfred awakened society's collective memory about past events, namely alleged collaboration with the colonial government which made many citizens skeptical about the participation of Christians in public life.¹⁵

Wilfred emphasized that one public dimension that is important to be promoted by religious people (Christians) is being involved together with other parties in advocacy projects. In essence, advocacy aims to influence decisions and policies for community life and the common good. Current needs and the context in Asia require Christians and the Church to play an advocacy role in promoting human rights and protecting vulnerable groups such as women, children, indigenous peoples, and tribes. It is also no less important to use local wisdom values as cultural capital for advocacy for environmental issues.¹⁶

Ecclesiology Model in the Perspective of Asian Public Theology According to Felix Wilfred

Based on Wilfred's perspective of Asian public theology, I argue that Wilfred's view of Asian public theology strengthens

¹⁴ Felix Wilfred, *Theology for An Inclusive World* (India: ISPCK, 2019), 72-73.

¹⁵ Wilfred, 110.

¹⁶ Benediktus Denar, Florensia Imelda Seran, and Jean Loustar Jewadut, "Dimensi Relasional Filosofi

Kuni Agu Kalo Dalam Masyarakat Manggarai," *Jurnal SMART (Studi Masyarakat, Religi, Dan Tradisi)* 9, no. 2 (2023): 175-92, <https://doi.org/10.18784/smart.v9i2.2026>.

the synodal ecclesiology model. The synodal ecclesiology model becomes urgent amidst the reality of the wide gap that separates Church leaders and the faithful. In the perspective of synodal ecclesiology, Church leaders are required to serve the people more effectively and efficiently by prioritizing direct and active participation in the lives of the people so that they can know more precisely the people's needs. In this participation, there is an attitude of mutual listening between Church leaders and the people they serve.

Synodal ecclesiology emphasizes connectivity between Church leaders and the needs of the people they serve. This has implications for the use of authority and pastoral leadership for the purpose of service and the servant and the party served are fellow pilgrims on the same journey.¹⁷ At this point, Church leaders are challenged to live up to the important message of the inverted pyramid concept as once echoed by Pope Francis where the top is below the base. This means that pastoral leadership in the Church must be understood in the context of service and the power it possesses must be linked to the power of the cross.¹⁸

¹⁷ Rikardus Jehaut, "Membedah Diskursus Sinodalitas Paus Fransiskus Dan Relevansinya Terhadap Kehidupan Menggereja Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Ledalero* 21, no. 1 (2022): 105–20, <https://doi.org/10.31385/jl.v21i1.284.105-120>.

¹⁸ Jehaut.

Synodal ecclesiology highlights pastoral leadership that places the active participation of all the faithful as a priority. On that basis, pastoral leadership must not be carried out by only focusing on one person or a group of people because in principle synodal ecclesiology carries the principles of participation and shared responsibility.¹⁹ This means that the exercise of pastoral leadership reveals the process organizing the life of the faithful in various pastoral aspects that prioritizes 'the participation of all the faithful, according to their respective vocations'.²⁰

In the perspective of synodal ecclesiology, the leadership model carried is not authoritarian leadership and single fighter, but rather participative leadership. The idea and practice of participatory leadership can be easily understood within the framework of the inverted pyramid symbol initiated by Pope Francis. The inverted pyramid model creates more opportunities for active participation and shared responsibilities. The active participation of all the faithful takes priority over the role of a few people who manage pastoral processes and activities.

¹⁹ Komisi Teologi Internasional, *Sinodalitas Dalam Kehidupan Dan Misi Gereja, Seri Dokumen Gerejawi* (Jakarta: Departemen Dokumentasi dan Penerangan Konferensi Wali Gereja Indonesia, 2022), art. 67.

²⁰ Komisi Teologi Internasional.

Synodal ecclesiology that promotes the inverted pyramid model makes active participation of all believers a priority. However, this idea should not be understood as a signal that the role of hierarchy is not important. What must be important to note is that while on the one hand the active participation of all the faithful is fundamental to synodal ecclesiology, the role of the hierarchy also remains important as facilitator or coordinator.

In carrying out pastoral leadership, the idea of synodal ecclesiology also promotes pastoral leadership that works with communicative and consultative mechanisms. The way pastoral decisions are made in synodal ecclesiology requires the participation of all parties through communication and consultation. This principle of communication and consultation is based on the principle used in Roman law which stipulates that *Quod omnes tangit, ab omnibus tractari et approbari debet* (what affects each person's life must be discussed first and agreed upon by all parties).²¹

The idea of synodal ecclesiology rests on the belief that each member of the community has equal dignity and is therefore treated as a subject. In other words, the

implementation of the principles of synodal ecclesiology is based on the belief 'that the whole Church is a subject and that everyone in the Church is a subject,' so that the faithful must be seen as companions on the journey.²² By referring to the words of Jesus: "I no longer call you servants, because the servant does not know what his master is doing, but I call you friends, because I have told you everything that I have heard from my Father (Jn. 15 :15), the Church is called to build itself as a community of friends. In the context of pastoral leadership, the text of John 15:15 is the basis for developing the leadership of friends or *filiarki*.²³

An important point about the Church's synodality emphasized by a number of women theologians is about the involvement and cooperation between men (clergy) and women in responding to gender issues. In 1983, at a joint meeting between the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) and First World liberation theologians (North America and Europe) in Geneva, women theologians from all continents joined together to support Third World women in their demands to pay attention to gender issues. The result is the basis of the Women's Commission support-

²¹ Komisi Teologi Internasional, art. 65.

²² Komisi Teologi Internasional, art. 55.

²³ Joas Adiprasetya, "Pastor as Friend: Reinterpreting Christian Leadership," *Dialog* 57, no. 1 (2018): 47–52, <https://doi.org/10.1111/dial.12377>.

ing a process in which Third World women can contextually make theological reflections based on their national and regional situations.²⁴

Feminism has become a global movement as women with different histories and cultures challenge patriarchal teachings and practices within the church and seek to demonstrate their faith and understanding of God. The feminist movement is no longer defined by the interests of upper-middle-class European and American women and also by Eurocentric frameworks and mindsets. Its scope has been expanded to include the theological voices of women from the Third World and from minority communities in the United States.²⁵

Letty M. Russel, as a feminist theologian, gave birth to a concept about the Church called “Hot House Ecclesiology.” This concept was born from the movement of a group of Japanese women who built a house for children and mothers who were victims of lead poisoning by one of the companies in Japan. The purpose of building this place is to become a safe, comfortable, and peaceful house or shelter for all victims.²⁶

Etymologically, “A Hot House” means a warming house. The church as A Hot House means a sanctuary that provides a sense of warmth, safety, and comfort for everyone who lives in it. According to Letty M. Russell, in order for the Church to be a place that provides protection and warmth for everyone, the Church must carry out four technical things in the life of the Father, namely (1) Believing that the Church comes from the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit accompanies all who are in the Church, both men and women; (2) Acknowledging that women have the same role as men in proclaiming good news. Because of the outpouring of the Spirit, everyone in the Church, both men and women, has the same opportunity to proclaim the good news; (3) The Church must offer hospitality to women. This means that the Church must show her face of compassion by embracing all people, both men and women; (4) The Church must act fairly to all its members, both male and female. Justice in the Church is manifested in the division of duties or roles.²⁷

²⁴ Rosemary Radford Ruether, “The Emergence of Christian Feminist Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology*, ed. Susan Frank Parsons (Inggris: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

²⁵ Kwok Pui-Lan, “Feminist Theology as Intercultural Discourse,” in *The Cambridge Companion to*

Feminist Theology, ed. Susan Frank Parsons (Inggris: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

²⁶ Letty M. Russel, “Hot House Ecclesiology: A Feminist Interpretation of The Church,” *The Ecumenical Review* 53, no. 1 (2001): 48–56.

²⁷ Russel.

Practical Implications for Church Pastoral Work in Indonesia

Critique of Clerical Feudalism

Public theology encourages the Church to be involved in all aspects of human life. The fundamental question is who is the Church? Historically, the Church has been exposed to disease due to attacks by the virus of clerical feudalism. However, potentially and as a legacy of the past, this virus could return to attack the Church's immune system at any time and in any situation.²⁸ The discourse on clerical feudalism is closely related to the leadership mechanism in the Church. Clerical feudalism promotes a leadership mechanism that privileges the clergy to define the pastoral realm. The result of clerical feudalism is the creation of an inequality of pastoral roles between the clergy and the laity in the context of the pastoral realm. Clerical feudalism positions the clergy as the first group that becomes the main reference for all kinds of matters related to pastoral care and the public as the second group that coordinates thoughts and actions based on the voice of the clergy. In reality, clerical fe-

dalism is not only nurtured by the clergy but also by lay people who have the view that the clergy are an elite group that is more important than the non-ordained people.²⁹

Clerical feudalism designed a model of the Church as an institution. This model really emphasizes the external and juridical aspects which tries to see the Church as a concrete society that has a constitution, a set of rules, a place of leadership, and the existence of members who accept these rules as a binding force in living together. However, the overemphasis on the Church as an institution led to entitlement the rights of the People of God are easily violated in the name of hierarchy, administration, and regulation.³⁰

Clerical feudalism must be subordinated to the basic principle that the Church is the people of God. The implementation of synods in several dioceses aims to make the Church more participatory and this means reducing the dominance of the clergy in developing the Church. The theological basis behind the concept of a participatory Church is the view of the Church as the people of God, namely all people who have been baptized. The Holy Spirit speaks through all of God's people,

²⁸ Franz Magnis-Suseno, *Iman Dan Hati Nurani Gereja Berhadapan Dengan Tantangan-Tantangan Zaman* (Jakarta: Obor, 2014), 79-80.

²⁹ John Mansford Prior, "Dosa Klerikalisme Membuka Mata Gereja," 2014.

³⁰ Martin Chen, "Gembala Berbau Domba: Refleksi Biblis-Teologis Tentang Gembala," in *Omnia in Caritate. Lakukanlah Semua Dalam Kasih. Kenangan Tahbisan Uskup Mgr. Siprianus Hormat Uskup Keuskupan Ruteng*, ed. Max Regus and Den Fidelis (Jakarta: Obor, 2020), 65.

whether hierarchical or lay.³¹ The Church must be present and actively involve itself in the joys and sorrows as well as the anxieties and hopes of the world today (GS 1). The focus of the Church's emphasis is not on theological reflection which focuses only on God in static contemplation of Himself, but on God in His dynamics as God for us, *Deus pro nobis*.³² Imitating God who is dynamic in human life, the Church is also called to involve itself actively and totally in the reality of human life.

Development of Participatory and Contextual Pastoral Work

The perspective of church or congregation development as an organism makes us aware that the measure of success in pastoral work is not only seen from the results achieved, but the process that provides equal opportunities to all of God's people to grow and develop their life potentials. Pastoral work is always dynamic. This means that pastoral work as the work of the Church is never finished, there is no maximum pastoral work, and it is always open to various input, corrections and criticism that come from many parties, both

from within the Church and from outside the Church.

Participatory pastoral work is realized through the principle of subsidiarity. Practically, the principle of subsidiarity provides opportunities for communities at a small level to carry out certain programs effectively and efficiently without having to be dictated excessively by communities at a larger/higher level. In church life, for example, the diocese should not take care of what can be carried out by the vicarage, the kevi-kepan should not take over tasks that can be done by the parish, the parish should not take over the work of the region, and the region should not take over tasks that can be done by the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC).³³

Effective pastoral work is not only carried out by providing opportunities for God's People to participate. The contextual dimension is urgent in the implementation of pastoral work so that it can respond to the needs of the people in a particular context. According to Steven Bevans, context includes four important things.³⁴ First, context includes personal or social experiences that influence a person. Second, context in-

³¹ Christopher Joseph, "Bishops Should Teach Continental Theology in Asia, Interview with Father Vimal Tirimanna," 2022.

³² Paulus Budi Kleden, *Teologi Terlibat* (Maumere: Ledalero, 2012), viii.

³³ John Mansford Prior, "Antara Monarki Dan Demokrasi: Melacak Jejak Laku Hierarki Gereja 40

Tahun Terakhir," in *Allah Menggugat Allah Menyembuhkan*, ed. Paulus Budi Kleden, Otto Gusti Madung, and Anselmus Meo (Maumere: Ledalero, 2012), 120.

³⁴ Stephen B Bevans, *Model-Model Teologi Kontekstual* (Maumere: Ledalero, 2020), 5-10.

cludes culture. Third, context includes the social location of a person or group of people. Fourth, context includes social realities in people's lives which are marked by change.

Contextual pastoral work uses the context of the people's lives as a reference for making pastoral policies so that the pastoral work carried out can answer the concrete needs of the people. Pastoral work that originates from the context of the people's lives makes people more enthusiastic about actively involving themselves in its implementation, rather than having to impose pastoral work that seems foreign or does not originate from the context of the people. So, there is a harmonious relationship between participatory pastoral work and contextual pastoral work. The more contextual a pastoral work is, the higher the congregation's participation.

Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) has become an organization that allows the Church to have a more participatory face in carrying out pastoral work. Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC)-based pastoral work that supports the development of the Church or congregation as an organism challenge tendencies. The clergy, who are already comfortable positioning themselves as rulers, must immediately change direction to pre-

sent themselves as facilitators who embrace all people with their various charisms. The Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC)-based church model must ignite the spirit of clerical service so that it cannot only be at home in the center, but must go down to peripheral areas to build cooperation, carry out discussions or dialogue, and it is not impossible to criticize each other for the common good. In this case, we must realize that a clergyman who has never learned about his own life history, who is not aware of his charism and the limits of his personal contribution, sees cooperation and discussion with the faithful as a threat.³⁵

The important task of the Church is to carry out pastoral work effectively, participatively, and contextually for the common good. Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) makes a significant contribution to the effectiveness of implementing participatory and contextual pastoral work. First, it has been explained in the previous section that pastoral work must involve all of God's People with their respective life potentials. Grouping the People of God with a small number in a Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) makes it easier to find and know more precisely the potentials possessed by the People of God which can support the

³⁵ Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, "Tanggung Jawab Dalam Imamat: Kisah Sebuah Pelayanan Yang

Sedang Mekar," in *Imam Masa Kini*, ed. Donald J. Goergen (Maumere: Penerbit Ledalero, 2003), 44.

effectiveness of carrying out certain pastoral work.

Second, in order to achieve participatory pastoral care, the implementation of the Church's pastoral work must not be carried out *en masse* so that there is an impression that not all members of the People of God are actively involved and it could also happen that there are certain parties who hide themselves behind the crowd. In this case, the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC), which consists of 10-20 families, plays an important role in the effective implementation of the participatory pastoral work of the Church. The fewer members there are, the more active participation is provided and the livelier communication is carried out between fellow members.

Third, in order to ground public theology, the Church's pastoral work must take place consistently bottom-up so that the pastoral policies taken and executed by the Church can respond to the context of life of the People of God.³⁶ In this case, the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) can play an active role because they consist of real or

concrete people. Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) is a faith community (grass-roots) consisting of concrete people and demands that fit the context of their lives. Inputs from Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) members resulting from regular meetings are very meaningful for the effectiveness of the contextual implementation of the Church's pastoral work. During this meeting, they certainly not only exchanged views and experiences, but also opened their eyes to problems and looked for appropriate solutions in the light of the Holy Scriptures.

Development of Diakonia Pastoral Work

Public theology directs the Church to dare to come out of the comfort of liturgical-centric or altar-centric pastoralism and dare to touch social reality with the complexity of its challenges. Public theology promotes dimensions *ad extra* from the synodality that is evident in the social works of the Church.³⁷ The Church's service work with an orientation towards social care is a calling from God and is an integral part of the Christian tradition.³⁸ The Church becomes a community of believers who bear

³⁶ Jean Loustar Jewadut and Fransiska Rosari Nirmala, "Peran Komunitas Basis Gerejawi Bagi Efektivitas Pelaksanaan Karya Pastoral Partisipatif Dan Kontekstual," *JPAK: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Katolik* 23, no. 2 (2023): 10–26, <https://doi.org/10.34150/jpak.v23i2.504>.

³⁷ Vincent J. Miller, "Synodality and the Sacramental Mission of the Church: The Struggle for Communion in a World Divided by Colonialism and

Neoliberal Globalization," *Theological Studies* 83, no. 1 (2022): 8–24, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00405639221076556>.

³⁸ Herry Susanto, "Panggilan Sosial Gereja Berdasarkan Pelayanan Yesus Dalam Lukas 4:18-19: Sebuah Upaya Merevitalisasi Pelayanan Gereja," *Veritas: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pelayanan* 19, no. 1 (2020): 97–112, <https://doi.org/10.36421/veritas.v19i1.356>.

the responsibility of “giving justice to the oppressed of the nation, helping the poor, but crushing the exploiters!” (Ps. 72:4). In this case, the Church carries out its duties as an agent of change in carrying out mission work and services, especially those related to poor communities.³⁹

The pastoral work of diakonia can be understood as the Church's call to reach out and touch the social realities of people's lives in a sign of justice, solidarity, and peace.⁴⁰ The pastoral work of diakonia affirms a definition of the existence of the Church that does not only refer to authority as an institution rich in the teachings of the magisterium, but also to the involvement of praxis in the lives of the faithful. This means that the Church has a social responsibility to support the achievement and maintenance of an atmosphere of peace, justice, and mutual prosperity.⁴¹

The Indonesian Church lives in the context of a multi-religious environment. Based on Felix Wilfred's public theology perspective, the Indonesian Church must acknowledge the fact of religious diversity and build cross-border relations without

making distinctions based on majority and minority considerations.⁴² So, the involvement of the Indonesian Church in responding to problems in society must also involve followers of other religions through dialogue and advocacy. Public theology highly upholds the principle of religious pluralism and invites adherents of every religion to build partnerships in the project of salvation and liberation. The public involvement of the Indonesian Church becomes more meaningful insofar as it becomes a means for fellowship with adherents of other religions.⁴³

CONCLUSION

The perspective of Asian public theology according to Felix Wilfred is certainly very relevant for the praxis of the Church's pastoral life. In the perspective of Asian public theology, the concept of the Church as God's people is increasingly gaining ground: true pastoral is participatory pastoral between clergy and lay people. In this case, Asian public theology can strengthen the ideas and praxis of synodal ecclesiology. Synodal ecclesiology that promotes the inverted pyramid model makes

³⁹ Jerry Pillay, “The Church as a Transformation and Change Agent,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 73, no. 3 (May 22, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4102/HTS.V73I3.4352>.

⁴⁰ Komisi Teologi Internasional, *Sinodalitas Dalam Kehidupan Dan Misi Gereja*, art. 119.

⁴¹ Fibry Jati Nugroho, “Gereja Dan Kemiskinan: Diskursus Peran Gereja Di Tengah Kemiskinan,”

Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili Dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat 3, no. 1 (January 30, 2019): 100–112, <https://doi.org/10.46445/EJTI.V3I1.128>.

⁴² Felix Wilfred, “Religious Freedom in Asia,” *Concilium* 4 (2016): 63–74.

⁴³ Wilfred, “Asian Theological Ferment (For Doing Theology in Contemporary Indonesia: Interdisciplinary Perspectives).”

active participation of all believers a priority. However, this idea should not be understood as a signal that the role of hierarchy is not important. What must be important to note is that while on the one hand the active participation of all the faithful is fundamental to synodal ecclesiology, the role of the hierarchy also remains important as facilitator or coordinator. This means that in the implementation of pastoral leadership, the clergy no longer act as authorities who regulate all the dynamics of pastoral work.

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