

## **Diaclesia as an Imaginative Ecclesiology Post-pandemic**

Contribution of the Meaning of Encounter, Presence,  
and Space to Martin Luther's Trinitarian Ecclesiology  
in Building Post-Pandemic Ecclesiology Based on the  
Experience of the Church in Indonesia

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Covid-19 pandemic over the past two years has brought many changes. As a result of these changes, post-pandemic ecclesiology is needed. Ecclesiology will be built based on an analysis of changes in the encounter, attendance, and space in church services during the pandemic. The analysis will have a constructive dialogue with four of Martin Luther's theologies: *iustitia Dei*, Theology of the Cross, Ecclesiology, and Trinitarian. This constructive dialogue will propose an imaginative post-pandemic ecclesiology idea, namely *Diaclesia*.

### **KEYWORDS:**

Pandemic, Ecclesiology, *Diaclesia*, Trinitarian, Encounter, Presence, Space, Martin Luther

### **INTRODUCTION**

The entire world has experienced the Covid-19 pandemic in the last two years. All parties are recommended to implement health protocols to anticipate the spread of the virus. One such protocol is personal distancing—this protocol changes individual interactions during the pandemic. Before the pandemic, physical encounters in the same place and space became a single model for the presence and encounter of each

individual in the community. After the pandemic, there was a very radical change. Encounter, Presence, and Space do not have to be in the same place because the pandemic has clarified that space is not only about a material place. Space can turn into a system that organizes individuals' encounters and presence. Therefore, there are three dimensions in community interactions that experience changes in meaning during a pandemic, namely Encounter, Presence, and Space.

Indeed, it must be realized that the church is between two tensions: the urge constantly to be authentic with change and the demand to remain faithful to the values and theological heritage of the church. The two tensions represent the two characteristics of the church, namely a rigid church and a liquid church. We are not able to choose the two traits or tensions above. Our position is to treat these two tensions in the course of church history. The church is open to changing times and internalizing the values and theological heritage present in church cognition and affection (*evolvere et valere*). Openness to changing times and the internalization of theological values and heritage is a constructive way to offer church newness.

That position is the basis for arguing that no theological thought has used the two tensions above to offer the concept of ecclesiology after the Covid-19 pandemic. We will work on that in this article. In this regard, we have not found any research based on a constructive and creative dialogue between Martin Luther's theology and the three aspects that changed during the pandemic, namely Encounter, Presence, and Space, which offer the concept of ecclesiology after the pandemic. We present this paper to offer an ecclesiological concept that comes from the dialogue between the three aspects of change during the pandemic and the legacy of Martin Luther's theology. The ecclesiology we offer is *diaklesia*.

## RESEARCH METHODS

Three methods will be used in this paper. The first is the analytical method. This method will analyze that three dimensions have changed in church practices during the pandemic. The descriptive method will explain four things in Martin Luther's theology, namely *Iustitia Dei*, Theology of the Cross, Trinitarian, and Ecclesiology. I think these four things contribute to understanding Luther's Trinitarian Ecclesiology. The third is the constructive method. The previous two methods, analytical and descriptive, will have a constructive dialogue. That constructive dialogue becomes the ecclesiology after the pandemic that we offer in this paper.

To operationalize the three methods above, we use a qualitative research work method, which involves a literature review and a brief description of personal experiences in church ministry practices during the pandemic.

## THE CHURCH FACING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The church's identity is expressed through the relationship of the three parties. Referring to John 15:19; 20:21, then identity is openness to the world when realizing God's mission. The church's openness to the world is increasingly felt during the pandemic. The church is in the world, so the church shares in every experience that occurs in the world. The church is drawn into the changes taking place in this world. In Indonesia, for example, the Circular of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia, dated March 16, 2020, has changed the church's existence by limiting physical interactions between individuals.<sup>1</sup> The adoption of the Health Protocol, as in the Circular, changed the practice of church ministry.

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<sup>1</sup> Menteri Kesehatan RI, 'Surat Edaran Menteri Kesehatan RI Nomor HK.02.01/MENKES/202/2020', 16 March 2020, [https://covid19.kemkes.go.id/download/SE\\_MENKES\\_202\\_2020\\_protokol\\_isolasi\\_diri\\_COVID.pdf](https://covid19.kemkes.go.id/download/SE_MENKES_202_2020_protokol_isolasi_diri_COVID.pdf).

The church's existence amid a pandemic does not only occur in the 21st century. Like the years 1347-1352, when the world experienced the Bubonic plague. The speed of the spread of the plague was not matched by an increased understanding of what was happening, so the plague was associated with God's punishment.<sup>2</sup> The church is trapped in the perspective of punishment, causing people to lose hope. Many people doubt the church's teachings and authority.<sup>3</sup> The church's failure to respond to the Bubonic plague contributed to the birth of the 16th-century church reformation.<sup>4</sup>

In subsequent developments, Martin Luther gave a new perspective on the plague through answers to questions from Johann Hess of Cecilia. Hess asked, what is the attitude of a Christian amid a plague, avoiding or running away.<sup>5</sup> Luther's answer to that question was to make preparations and take courage because everyone was bound together, not leaving each other or running away, and sticking to medicine.<sup>6</sup>

The answer above shows that Luther did not connect the plague with God's punishment. The plague encourages believers to present themselves creatively when they encounter others. The creative way uses the perspective of maintaining life together. Luther's perspective will be redeveloped in this paper, that the Covid-19 pandemic has pushed the church to a creative presence in the world.

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<sup>2</sup> Joshua J. Mark, 'Religious Responses to the Black Death', World History Encyclopedia, 2020, <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1541/religious-responses-to-the-black-death/>.

<sup>3</sup> James R Payton, *Getting the Reformation Wrong: Correcting Some Misunderstanding* (Madison: InterVarsity Press, 2010), 42.

<sup>4</sup> Zachary Peschke, 'The Impact of the Black Death', *ESSAI* 5, no. 22 (2007): 4.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Lukas Lukito, 'Prinsip dan sikap pastoral Martin Luther', 16 March 2021, <http://themelios.net/2020/06/28/prinsip-dan-sikap-pastoral-martin-luther/>.

<sup>6</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 43 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 119.

Even though, at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, the church was hesitant in Encounter, Presence, and Space in ministry, the church quickly transformed. Encounter, Presence, and Space are realized virtually by utilizing network technology or the internet. Kyle Kenneth Schiefelbein-Guerrero of the United Lutheran Seminary explained that the virtual community in church ministry practices during a pandemic is the same as the physical community in a health crisis.<sup>7</sup> Schiefelbein-Guerrero's opinion opens the opportunity to give birth to a new perspective on the three changes in church practice during the pandemic, namely Encounter, Presence, and Space.

Efforts to practice encounter, space, and presence from new perspectives have been carried out in Indonesia, one of which is through the call for the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI). PGI invites churches to take advantage of e-church,<sup>8</sup> as done by several local congregations, namely JPCC and GKI Pondok Indah. For PGI, e-church service is not just a change in service practice but a new way for the church to develop solidarity to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

PGI's view that encourages e-church has not been able to answer the Encounter, Presence, and Space in the practice of serving churches throughout Indonesia. For PGI's call to be implemented, the internet network is an absolute necessity. The problem is, the internet network is not evenly distributed throughout Indonesia, for example, some congregations in North Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra. If the congregations in North Tapanuli Regency develop e-church services, then there will be people who are alienated from service due to the non-existent internet network. Therefore, what was developed was not an e-church but a print-out church. The print-out

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<sup>7</sup> Kyle Kenneth Schiefelbein-Guerrero, 'Whether One May Flee from Digital Worship: Reflections on Sacramental Ministry in a Public Health Crisis', *Dialog* 59, no. 2 (June 2020): 50, <https://doi.org/10.1111/dial.12549>.

<sup>8</sup> 'PGI Dukung Ibadah Online Untuk Mengatasi Penyebaran Covid-19', 15 March 2020, <https://pgi.or.id/pgi-dukung-ibadah-online-untuk-mengatasi-penyebaran-covid-19>.

church is meant for Encounter, Presence, and Space in liturgical practice through printed worship sheets and then distributed to the homes of church members. Pastors prepare worship arrangements and sermons. The elders of each village are in charge of distributing the worship sheets to every family member of the congregation.

The phenomenon of the experience of churches in Indonesia above shows that the encounter, space, and in-service attendance practice can be divided into two parts, virtual (audio-visual) and print-out (written). The two sections were then grouped into three categories, Synchronous Online and Asynchronous Online for virtual services and Asynchronous Offline for print-out services. The three categories need to be explained to find the differences between Encounter, Presence, and Space in the three categories.

The First is synchronous online. Every member of the church community experiences the encounter, space, and presence simultaneously, even though they are in different places, thus requiring internet network technology because it is real-time. Synchronous online uses a live streaming broadcasting system through social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Zoom. Through the mediation of network technology, each individual becomes one space in the social media platform, which finds each the presence participating in the service.

Schiefelbein-Guerrero argues that real-time ministry is compatible with Lutheranism because everyone can interact, which is an integral part of worship.<sup>9</sup> Using the opinion of Schiefelbein-Guerrero, the virtual space that appears on a computer or mobile phone screen is an encounter space for everyone's presence. The visual of the person appearing on the screen is no longer an avatar but "the presence of himself".

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<sup>9</sup> Schiefelbein-Guerrero, 'Whether One May Flee from Digital Worship', 52.

Second, asynchronous online. This second form is different from the first form. The first form is live streaming or real-time, while the second form is a delayed broadcast. Using the perspective of Schiefelbein-Guerrero, the delayed broadcast is challenging to accept as a form of church. The space on social media platforms imitates presence (avatar), not your presence. However, Schiefelbein-Guerrero's opinion did not escape criticism. The social media platform remains an encounter space for everyone's presence, even though it is asynchronous if everyone in the service is in the same cognition and affection.

Third, asynchronous offline. In this third form, service practices use print-out facilities. The space that finds every attendance is literacy recorded in the worship sheet. Referring to the second form above, the meaning of presence is no longer a visual presence but the presence of cognition and affection in the same practice. If attendance is interpreted in terms of the same cognition and affection, then the print-out of the event sheet becomes a space that provides an encounter for each presence.

Seeing how the church has implemented service practices during the pandemic, especially in Indonesia, there is no single category. The context of the church contributes to shaping the experience of church ministry. If the church is in a place that already has access to the internet network system, then the church can take advantage of the online system as a reality of its ministry experience. If the church is in a place that does not have access to a network system, then the church uses an offline system as a reality of service experience. Thus, the service category (online or offline) is only an augmented reality in the church experience. As that category becomes augmented reality, no single online or offline experience can represent the church's true nature.

## **EXPANSION OF THE MEANING OF ENCOUNTER, SPACE, AND PRESENCE RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

### **Encounter**

Utilizing post-colonial thinking, we will link encounters with subalterns. Subaltern is the domination and control of a group of people in power over other groups who do not have power.<sup>10</sup> In the 1970s, the subaltern discourse became popular in India as a critique against colonial domination, namely Britain. Subaltern is a social study that critiques the project of capitalist modernity, which sharpens inequality and social and political conflict.<sup>11</sup> Subaltern becomes a critical discourse against domination and alienation so that equal communities can be cultivated. In the community, no one dominates each other.

The ideas of a post-colonial thinker named Homi Bhabha can be used in this paper. Two things in Bhabha's thinking are related to subaltern interpretation.<sup>12</sup> First, Bhabha finds a very rigid relationship between East and West. The West (colonial) imposes its culture on the East; Second, Bhabha conducts an in-depth study of colonial history so that he offers that the colonial system is a thing of the past. To improve future life, we must go beyond the past and must be left behind, including the dominant system in it.

If the two thoughts of Bhabha above dialogue with subaltern criticism, then two things will be proposed. First, post-colonial is a condition of ending hegemony and domination, replacing by equality. Second, post-colonial is the end of the rigidity of two relations, such as the West-East.

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<sup>10</sup> Bill Ashcroft et al., *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 2nd ed (London ; New York: Routledge, 2009), 198.

<sup>11</sup> Gyan Prakash, 'Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism', *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (December 1994): 1476, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2168385>.

<sup>12</sup> David Huddart, Homi K. Bhabha, *Routledge Critical Thinkers* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2005), 3.

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Bhabha's concern for colonialism is manifested through proposals that renew dichotomous relations. Through the colonial nation, Western culture isolated eastern culture and isolated it on the periphery of culture. As a result, there is a cultural contradiction with the character of rejection; for example, the west rejects the east. Post-colonial interpretation is the rejection of negation. Bhabha proposes negotiation in place of negation. Negotiation is a way or articulation to understand the contradictory (Bhabha 2004, 37).<sup>13</sup> The contradictory characters in the negation are replaced by negotiation. Through negotiation, something contradictory is no longer an antagonist but becomes an opportunity for dialogue with the contradictory.

Bhabha's thoughts above want to use the negotiation function to destroy negative polarization.<sup>14</sup> If Bhabha destroys negative polarization, then the post-colonial interpretation is an attempt to create positive polarization. The differentiator does not create conflict and conquest between one another. Two separate positions must be filled by the in-between space, which dialogues the two different positions, not contradicts them.

Bhabha proposes that there should be no mutual rejection between two different cultures but rather a hybrid presence through the negotiation function. Joint presence is influenced by the existence of a culture that cannot stand alone. Each

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<sup>13</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge Classics (London ; New York: Routledge, 2004), 37.

<sup>14</sup> Bhabha, 37.

culture is connected to the others to form a cultural mix through the connectivity that the in-between space fosters.<sup>15</sup>

Bhabha also mentions in-between as the third place that negotiates change, not accommodating cultural diversity or multiple identities.<sup>16</sup> Bhabha makes a distinction between negotiation and accommodation. Negotiation is a cultural change to replace the dichotomous character with long roots in the modern era. Meanwhile, accommodation does not always lead to a change. The change proposed by Bhabha is the turning position of the relationship between the two parties, from antagonist to protagonist. The point to turn is the third space or in-between.<sup>17</sup>

Bhabha's view above is relevant to interpreting the encounter. The form of the encounter cannot be limited by one form only. The encounter is hybrid, not dichotomous. For example, in the context of an encounter during a pandemic, an encounter through physical presence does not make a dichotomy or cancel out non-physical presence. Bhabha's view here can emphasize that a hybrid encounter can involve two forms at once, physical and immaterial, virtual and print-out. The pandemic becomes an in-between that bends and negotiates the two encounters into a hybrid encounter.

## **Space**

According to the online Oxford Dictionary, the difference between "space" and "place" lies in the object. The meaning of "space" is the interaction and relationship of two parties so that the object is not always material. While the word "place" means at a specific location that can be identified materially.

The discussion of the meaning of the word "space" has been going on for a long time and revolves around two different poles of thought, namely Newton's followers and Leibniz's

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<sup>15</sup> Huddart, Homi K. Bhabha, 4; Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Bhabha, 7.

followers. The two figures are physicists. For the followers of Newton, who came to be called Newtonians, space is absolute, which has no relation to one another.<sup>18</sup> At a different pole from Newton, Leibniz argues that space can embrace the relative and the absolute to be relative and interactive.<sup>19</sup> The existence of space becomes real when there is a relationship that brings together several different entities; So, in Leibniz's opinion, the nature of space is relational.

I will use Leibniz's thinking as the basis for the difference between "space" and "place" in this paper. The three forms of church service practices during the pandemic show the difference between "space" and "place." Whatever the form of church service during the pandemic (Synchronous Online, Asynchronous Online, Asynchronous Offline), at least it occurs in two different "places," namely church and home or other places. In Synchronous and Asynchronous Online forms, the "space" used to relate the encounter of two different places is a virtual space through social media platforms. While in the Asynchronous Offline form, "space" is a print-out of worship sheets.

Next, I will try to relate the meaning of "space" to habitus, which influences the cognition and affection of each entity in relational space. The perspective that will be used is that of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's thinking about "space" is closely related to the symbolization of power. In this paper, we limit ourselves not to enter into this symbol of power. Bourdieu's ideas that we use in this paper to explain the "space" of social interaction, media presence, and encounters between individuals.

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<sup>18</sup> Xiaoxue Gao, *Thinking of Space Relationally : Critical Realism Beyond Relativism - A Manifold Study of the Artworld in Beijing*, Urban Studies (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2021), 49, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=2962425&site=ehost-live>.

<sup>19</sup> Xiaoxue Gao, 50.

Bourdieu explains that there are two forms of habitus, namely: "a sense of one's place" and "a sense of the place of others".<sup>20</sup> The place can be interpreted as "a sense of one's place" and space as "a sense of the place of others." Both will form a relationship or are connected, forming a schema of perception and appreciation of practice, cognitive and evaluative structures through the experience of "space".<sup>21</sup> The cognition and affection of each individual will be formed in the community. It does not stop there; cognition and affection will encourage each individual to interpret the encounter in the community. The cognitions and affections produced by the relational system in the community meeting space and the cognition and affections that encourage the awareness of each individual to meet in the community space become habitus in the community. In other words, space is a relation of cognition and affection of each individual that can be carried out in several places simultaneously.

Regarding changes in the church experience during the pandemic, the habitus of the church after the pandemic will be determined by cognition and affection towards attendance and encounters, which are no longer limited by the same place, but by the system of relationships between individuals in one space even though they are in different places. So, space is not only a matter of material but encounters that establish relationships. In the fabric of that encounter, each individual's cognition and affection have a significant contribution to making meaning of his presence.

## **Presence**

This section will explain the meaning of presence, aided by the thoughts of Jacques Derrida, a philosopher of French Algerian descent. Derrida notes that everything must start from the

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<sup>20</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, 'Social Space and Symbolic Power', *Sociological Theory* 7, no. 1 (1989): 21, <https://doi.org/10.2307/202060>.

<sup>21</sup> Bourdieu, 19.

totality of the system.<sup>22</sup> The totality of the system is used to understand writing. For Derrida, writing is a metaphor, a named figure, so that the identity of the text in writing does not only belong to the author but also to the reader.<sup>23</sup> Identity lies in the meaning of writing which involves two parties: the writer and the reader. The totality of the system is fulfilled if the reader is also involved in the meaning of the text so that the positions of the writer and the reader do not conflict (binary opposition).

Through the totality of the system, nothing is outside the writing, either the writer or the reader. Due to the totality of the system, writing has a dual presence, namely the presence of readers who interpret writing and the presence of writers in writing in unpredictable ways.<sup>24</sup> If there is a dual presence in writing, namely the writer and the reader, then there is a hybrid presence, namely the context of the author and the context of the reader. The context of the writer and the reader is involved in interpreting the writing.

The presence of hybrids in writing will be used to interpret presence. Derrida places presence in two forms, namely presence in the form of an object (presence in the form of the object) and presence in oneself (self-presence).<sup>25</sup> The writer experiences presence for the reader even though it is not a form of self-presence but present in the form of the object. The presence in the two forms (presence in the form of the object and self-presence) is not contradictory because Derrida emphasizes that presence in the object is another form of self-

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<sup>22</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins university press, 1976), 45.

<sup>23</sup> Julian Wolfreys, *Deconstruction, Derrida, Transitions* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 62.

<sup>24</sup> Wolfreys, 61.

<sup>25</sup> David A. White, *Derrida on Being As Presence : Questions and Quests* (Warsaw: De Gruyter Open Poland, 2017), 14,  
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=2945143&site=ehost-live>.

presence.<sup>26</sup> The two forms of presence do not cancel each other out because both can be present together.

The two forms can be explained through the signifier and signify approaches. Self-presence is a sign; presence in the form of the object is a signifier. Presence in the form of the object is a marker of one's presence (signifier). Referring to such an argument, in interpreting attendance, we agree with Derrida's opinion that "re-presentation is a presentation".<sup>27</sup> Using Derrida's perspective, i distinguish between "re-presentation" and "representation." "Re-presentation" is the repetition of real presence so that there is no separation between the signifier and the signified (in the signifier, there is a signified). There is nothing to represent and be represented in re-presentation, which makes the avatar only a signifier of the person being represented. At the same time, "representation" makes the avatar only a marker of the person represented (signifier).

Returning to the relationship between the writer and the reader, as previously explained, writing is the presence in the form of the object of self-presence, namely the author himself. The presence of the writer (signify) in the presence in the form of the object (signifier) is not only the presence of written material in the form of words and sentences but also the presence of cognition and affection. Suppose it is related to the totality of the system that involves the writer and the reader in interpreting the writing. In that case, the presence of the writer's cognition and affection in writing will meet the reader's cognition and affection in the meaning of the writing. In other words, physical absence (the writer for the reader) becomes a real presence because, in writing, there is the

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<sup>26</sup> David A. White, 15.

<sup>27</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena, and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 52.

presence of cognition and affection between the writer and the reader.

Based on the explanation above, the meaning of presence is not limited to physical appearance. Presence can occur through cognition and affect. If this meaning is used to understand attendance in church service practices during a pandemic, then we propose that attendance will exist if cognition and affection between individuals are interconnected. So, the three variables that appear in the pandemic phenomenon: encounter, space, and presence, are related to each other even though there are differences between them.

### **Construction of Encounter, Space, and Presence**

We have tried to interpret the encounter, space, and presence through the explanations above. Next, we propose that the three constructions depart from phenomena in several countries during the pandemic:

Yet, people in many countries found ways to break their loneliness: concerts on the balconies, messages of hope and solidarity in the windows, applause in honor of the doctors and nurses, lighted candles, and so on. These small, spontaneous gestures were full of meaning and life.<sup>28</sup> (Kosmidis 2020, 616).

The Kosmidis explanation above emphasizes that reactions on the balcony, messages of hope, and solidarity at the door, can be referred to as a form of presence and encounter in the community space. Although not manifested in the form of a physical encounter, the presence of individuals actually gives a new face to the encounter. The presence of each individual without a physical encounter becomes an encounter because

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<sup>28</sup> Nikos Kosmidis, 'A Search for a Theology of Life: The Challenge of COVID-19 for Orthodox Ecclesiology and Religious Practices', *The Ecumenical Review* 72, no. 4 (October 2020): 616, <https://doi.org/10.1111/erev.12551>.

the community space has been filled with the same affection and cognition, namely messages of hope and solidarity.

That is the thought construction that we offer in this paper. The construction of the three aspects in the explanation above can be concluded through the preposition in Greek, namely *dia*. Luke 17:11 uses *dia* to describe Jesus' journey from Jerusalem across the borders of Samaria and Galilee. Therefore, he said it is an action that transcends certain boundaries, such as place, space, and time.<sup>29</sup>

Referring to the community experience written by Kosmidis, the constructive explanation of the presence, space, and encounter above opens the opportunity for the construction of interpretation. This constructive interpretation will create a community that crosses borders and transcends the boundaries of place and time. I will use such an interpretation to understand Martin Luther's Trinitarian-Ecclesiology.

## **MARTIN LUTHER'S ECCLESIOLOGY**

### **From *Iustitia Fidei* to Theology of the Cross**

I will begin by explaining Lutheran ecclesiology from the concept of *iustitia fidei*. In our opinion, *iustitia fidei* is the starting point for understanding Martin Luther's theology, including ecclesiology. The understanding of *iustitia fidei* is inseparable from the theological tradition in Germany before the church reformation, namely the tradition of pietism. The pietism tradition emphasizes the piety of life and the sanctity of life to avoid the judgment of God. This tradition is the belief system in central Germany, where Martin Luther grew up.<sup>30</sup> In

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<sup>29</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 134.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith*, *Christian Theology in Context* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 12.

addition to a sacred way of life, the belief system emphasized the performance of rituals pleasing to God.<sup>31</sup>

Pietism's belief system influenced Martin Luther. Luther argues that to experience God's forgiving grace, he must live in piety like the legacy of the pietist tradition.<sup>32</sup> Before the Reformation, the Pietism tradition was present in Luther's theological thought, which emphasized the piety of life and the discipline of performing religious rituals. Later, especially after the Reformation of the church, Luther's theology underwent a change that Augustine of Hippo influenced. Augustine argues *iustitia Dei non qua deus iustus est, sed qua induit hominem* (the truth of God, not by which God becomes righteous, but by which He gives grace to man).<sup>33</sup> Later, Augustine's theology, which emphasized that grace is God's justification (*iustitia Dei*), was modified by Luther into *iustitia fidei*, which emphasized justification by faith.

*Iustitia fidei* shows the perspective of Martin Luther, who turned away from the scholastic tradition. Luther's proposition about faith can be seen through his sermon notes in the first week after Trinity week, which refers to the gospel of Luke 16:19-31 about a rich man. According to Luther, the nature of faith expects and relies on God's goodness.<sup>34</sup> Luther asserted that faith would lead a person to know God, His goodness, and mercy so that with such knowledge, a person's heart becomes tender and loving imitating God's tenderness

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<sup>31</sup> Kolb, 13.

<sup>32</sup> Susan C. Karant-Nunn, *The Personal Luther: Essays on the Reformer from a Cultural Historical Perspective*, St. Andrews Studies in Reformation History (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2017), 67.

<sup>33</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough*, 2nd ed (Malden, Mass. ; Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 154.

<sup>34</sup> Martin Luther, *The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther*, ed. John Nicholas Lenker, vol. XI (Minneapolis, Minn: Lutherans In All Lands Co, 1906), 20.

towards him.<sup>35</sup> Faith will show that God does not show fear but carries the man's burden.<sup>36</sup>

The focus of faith in Martin Luther's theological propositions is on God's mercy, goodness, and sacrifice. Thus, *iustitia fidei* cannot be separated from the Theology of the Cross. The theology of the Cross was Luther's resistance to the theology that was developing at that time, namely the theology of glory. According to Paul S Chung, the theology of glory is the knowledge of God derived from the Scholastic metaphysical tradition. In contrast, the Theology of the Cross is knowledge of the crucified God.<sup>37</sup> The perspective used by Martin to understand God's work for the world through the death of Jesus on the cross has opened up new theological thinking in his day. The cross is no longer a sign of humiliation but a sign of proclaiming God's presence.

The presence of God on the cross was described by Martin Luther through his sermon on Good Friday in 1525: "You cast your sins from yourself and onto Christ when you firmly believe that his wounds and sufferings are your sins, to be borne and paid for by him".<sup>38</sup> The cross is an expression of God's grace and grace. Therefore, Luther emphasized, as written in the Heidelberg Disputation article 24, that humans have abused the most precious thing in the worst way.<sup>39</sup> Luther emphasized that without the cross, humans cannot know and experience God because the cross is the complete revelation of God.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Luther, XI:20.

<sup>36</sup> Luther, XI:19.

<sup>37</sup> Paul S. Chung, 'The Future of Martin Luther in an Asian Context', *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 42, no. 1 (March 2003): 63, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-6385.00140>.

<sup>38</sup> Martin Luther, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 151.

<sup>39</sup> Luther, 30.

<sup>40</sup> Luther, *The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther*, XI:187.

Luther's perspective shows the difference between his theology and the Scholastic tradition. The Scholastic perspective explains that God's presence on the cross needs to be doubted because He could not have been present in a lowly place. In response, the Theology of the Cross explains that God's hidden revelation due to human guesses at the location of the revelation, namely the cross, is a barrier to seeing God's presence there.<sup>41</sup> If the Scholastic heritage is maintained, there is no grace of God on the cross. Jesus' death is a message of grace to humankind because God demonstrated the most fundamental truth of kenosis in Godself revelation (*Deus revelatus*) on the cross.<sup>42</sup> Based on this explanation, God's concealment on the cross (*Deus absconditus*) does not mean alienating Godself from humans. In that hiddenness, God reveals Godself (*Deus revelatus*) through the gift of kenosis that is proclaimed to humans.

Martin Luther's Theology of the Cross shows that there is no contradiction or division at the cross. The cross happens to reveal the hybridity of God's presence. The hidden God and the revealed God, *Deus absconditus et Deus revelatus*.<sup>43</sup> The question to be asked here is, is there still a current context that the Theology of the Cross can enter even though there is a very far difference in time and context between Luther and the present? This question was asked by Joas Adiprasetya when using the Theology of the Cross in an Asian context.<sup>44</sup> Despite the disparity in time and context, we agree with Paul S. Chung's opinion that Luther's idea of the Theology of the Cross can be reread because the suffering of God in the Christian tradition is still under the influence of Greek philosophy.<sup>45</sup> Using Chung's opinion, the Theology of the

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<sup>41</sup> McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, 217.

<sup>42</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 205.

<sup>43</sup> Joas Adiprasetya, 'God in the Crucified People', *Journal of Reformed Theology* 12, no. 3 (17 October 2018): 287, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15697312-01203002>.

<sup>44</sup> Adiprasetya, 285.

<sup>45</sup> Chung, 'The Future of Martin Luther in an Asian Context', 62.

Cross opens up opportunities to interpret God's revelation in the various contexts that humans are currently facing.

The theological view born of the Cross is solidarity. Solidarity on the Cross is God's work for the world. God takes on a hybrid presence on the Cross to manifest Godself solidarity and work for the world. God did not separate Godself from the world, as the Scholastic thought traces that God exists only in heaven. He hidden (*Deus Absconditus*) entered humanity in Godself suffering and death. At the same time, He also reveals Godself (*Deus revelatus*) because Son is God who works and is in solidarity with the world. *Deus absconditus* and *Deus revelatus* take place in a hybrid manner on the Cross.

### **From the Trinity to Ecclesiology**

#### The Trinity in Martin Luther's Perspective

Chung noted that Luther's thought of the Trinity was the unity of nature in the Trinity. The three persons of God act and work for the world in a cooperative relationship.<sup>46</sup> Luther's concept can be seen in two models, God for Himself (Immanent Trinity) and God for the world (Economic Trinity). The two models are not contradictory but interrelated—God for Himself who is connected with creation. Therefore, Luther's thought about the Trinity explains the existence of a hybrid God: God's existence in Himself and His existence for creation.

Therefore, Luther's thought still inherits the church tradition, which explains that the Economic Trinity is the three persons of God who are interrelated, present, and reveal God's work in world history (*opera trinitatis ad extra*). Economic Trinity is the basis for understanding the Immanent Trinity, God in Godself (*opera trinitatis ad intra*), as the One God in three Persons. God who relates to God's creation in world history, *opera trinitatis ad extra*, is not separate from God in Godself, *opera trinitatis ad intra*.<sup>47</sup> The difference between the two

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<sup>46</sup> Chung, 39.

<sup>47</sup> Chung, 42.

models of the Trinity lies in the meaning of "related to." Economic Trinity is "related to" creation. Meanwhile, Immanent Trinity is "related to" Godself as a creator. However, as Chung notes on Luther above, to understand the Immanent Trinity, one must start from the Economic Trinity.

However, we need to present the characteristics of Luther's thought about the Trinity through the perspective of God's incarnation in Jesus Christ. The incarnation of God is the perichoresis of the Father, who becomes the Economic Trinity.<sup>48</sup> In the context of this paper, perichoresis is an *inhabitatio* or indwelling of God (Stamatović 2016, 305). Referring to the previous explanation that the Theology of the Cross is God's solidarity and work for the world. The Father's perichoresis in Economic Trinity is God's *inhabitatio* solidarity and work in the world. God in Godself (Immanent Trinity) is interrelated so that through His work on the cross (Economic Trinity), He is present to the world in God's work of solidarity.

The Immanent Trinity and Economic Trinity in Martin Luther's explanation need to be juxtaposed with the presence of God in the Theology of the Cross. God is in Godself, hidden in the cross (*Deus Absconditus*-Immanent Trinity), related to each other to work for the world through the solidarity of Christ on the cross (*Deus Revelatus*-Economic Trinity). This idea will be used to understand Martin Luther's ecclesiology.

### Trinitarian-Ecclesiology

The explanation of the Trinity in Martin Luther's perspective above is used to interpret ecclesiology. For Luther, the church was Trinity-oriented. We will explain several aspects to show that the Trinity is the framework of Ecclesiology from Luther's perspective. First, Luther refers to Mary's attitude when she heard the news of the birth of Jesus from Mary in Luke 1:30-38. Mary, who received God's word in faith, made her the

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<sup>48</sup> Chung, 42.

prototype and image of the church.<sup>49</sup> The faith of the church must imitate the faith of Mary.

Second, the Theology of the Cross is the center of the church's faith. Martin Luther's theology focuses on the grace of God that justifies man through the cross. Explanations in the Theology of the Cross have previously asserted that the cross is the space of God's hybrid revelation, *Deus Absconditus et Deus Revelatus*, through the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth. The church is a community of people who have faith in the hybrid revelation of God incarnate on the cross through Christ. On that basis, the church is the body of Christ in the world, and Christ is the head of the church.

It must be admitted that Luther's ecclesiology seems to be Christocentric Ecclesiology. However, Chung clarifies that The rejection of the Scholastic tradition influenced Christology's approach to Martin Luther's ecclesiology. Luther explained that the Christian faith must move from God's grace sealed through the work of God's incarnation on the cross. Christocentrism is the starting point for believing in the essential Trinitarian God's gift to humans. Referring to Moltmann's opinion that we have quoted earlier, the essential Trinitarian grace revealed on the cross, namely *kenosis*. On the cross, God met humanity in the incarnation and crucifixion of the Son.<sup>50</sup> Moltmann's opinion complements Martin Luther's Theology of the Cross. The cross is God's relationship with His fleshly incarnation in humanity, namely Jesus of Nazareth, who radiates love for the world and people by the power of His Spirit. This explanation shows that the cross is not only Christocentric, so the revelation of Christ on the cross is a moving point to believe in the Economic Trinity for the world and humans.

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<sup>49</sup> Chung, 121.

<sup>50</sup> Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 119.

Thus, the understanding of the church as the body of Christ must depart from the Economic Trinity, which is expressed through the cross. The revelation on the cross explains the hybridity of God himself: God with a human (Economic Trinity *Intra Deus Revelatus*) and God with Godself (Immanent Trinity *Intra Deus Absconditus*). In the first relation, Economic Trinity *Intra Deus Revelatus* explains the *kenosis* of God in solidarity with His creation. Furthermore, the second relationship, Immanent Trinity *Intra Deus Absconditus*, is God's relationship with Godself, which confirms the depth of God's mystery before the church. These two relationships are the basis for the church to create a relational fellowship in this world.

The church as a relational fellowship includes two aspects. First, a fellowship that embodies God's solidarity in the world. This first aspect is a consequence of the church as the body of Christ. Second, a fellowship that recognizes the depths of God's mystery in the world. The emphasis on the church as a community aligns with Luther's church principles as described in the Smalcald Article. The church is likened to a flock of sheep who hear the voice of their shepherd.<sup>51</sup> The church as a flock indicates the church's existence in the presence of the flock or fellowship, not on the building or institution. Although Luther acknowledged the existence of a building that is not separate from communion, the meaning of a church building is only "a place," not a "space" that relates to communion and which recognizes the depth of God's mystery.<sup>52</sup> Veli Matti Kärkkäinen also recognized Luther's assertion that the church is communion. Kärkkäinen explains

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<sup>51</sup> Thodore Tappert, ed., *Buku Konkord: Konfesi Gereja Lutheran*, trans. Mangisi S.E Simorangkir (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2004), 406; Kolb, Martin Luther, 154.

<sup>52</sup> Tappert, *Buku Konkord: Konfesi Gereja Lutheran*, 570.

that Martin Luther's ecclesiological approach does not use an institutional approach but encounters fellowship.<sup>53</sup>

Based on the explanation above, the church must be distinguished between place and space. The place is more institutional, and the space emphasizes relationships. Although different, the two need not be contradicted. The two are hybrid-related so that the church is a space that creates a fellowship relationship to realize God's solidarity with the world (relational-space). The church is a fellowship space that acknowledges the depth of God's mystery, which is present in the world in the form of a named community (institutional-place).

As a fellowship with a hybrid meaning, the church must also be aware of its existence. Although the church wants to realize God's mission of solidarity for the world, one must also realize that there is the mystery of God in the mission itself. The church is not a re-presentation of God but a representation. If the church re-presentation of God, then the church positions itself as God. Thus, the church has detached itself from the aspect of the Immanent Trinity Intra *Deus Absconditus*.

If it is a representation, then in the church's relationship with the world, the world can experience a real encounter with God through the church's presence in the world. The representation also emphasized that although the church has limitations and weaknesses that the world sometimes despises, there is also a depth of God's mystery within the church that the church itself and the world cannot solve. Thus, the church will not be greater than the Trinitarian God even though the church's role is to embody God's solidarity relationship with the world. The church will remain a community subject to the mystery of the Triune God.

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<sup>53</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Historical, Global, and Interreligious Perspectives*, Second edition, revised and expanded (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021), 39.

## IMAGINATIVE CHURCH POST-PANDEMIC

Many scholars have explained that the word "church" comes from *ekklesia*. *Ekklesia* comes from two Greek syllables, namely: *Ek* and *Kaleo*. The preposition *Ek* means out. However, the preposition emphasizes something that comes out and the source of the impetus for the outward movement.<sup>54</sup> Then, the word *Kaleo* means "to be called." Usually, the word *Kaleo* is a call for soldiers to assemble before entering into battle.<sup>55</sup> The word *ekklesia* gives an epistemological meaning: a movement from the inside to the outside, entering a place and time outside of oneself.

Before being used to mean church, the use of the word *ekklesia* in the ancient Greek context was used to describe the activities of citizens in the city-state (polis). People come together to make decisions. Everyone was present at the meeting, and at the same time, the meeting also became a bridge connecting all communities. From the description of society described by the word *ekklesia*, the word also reflects or describes democracy.<sup>56</sup> In addition to the description of democratic culture, the word *ekklesia* can also be understood as a group of citizens who are called out of their homes to a public place.<sup>57</sup>

The explanation above illustrates that the word *ekklesia* emphasizes fellowship. The Septuagint can also be seen, which several times makes the word *ekklesia* derivative. Two of the words derived from *ekklesia* are *ekklesiazō* and *exekklesiazomai*. Both words

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<sup>54</sup> 'G1537 - Ek - Strong's Greek Lexicon (Kjv)', Blue Letter Bible, accessed 1 October 2021, [https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/gen/1/1/s\\_1001](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/gen/1/1/s_1001).

<sup>55</sup> Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1975), 291.

<sup>56</sup> Brown, 1:291.

<sup>57</sup> 'Ekklesia Meaning in Bible - New Testament Greek Lexicon - New American Standard', biblestudytools.com, accessed 1 October 2021, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/ekklesia.html>.

have the same meaning: gather together.<sup>58</sup> In the New Testament text, it can also be found that the word *ekklesia* is connected with *synago* (to gather/ gather). The word *synago* appears 59 times in the New Testament.<sup>59</sup> An example is in Matthew 12:30. There, Jesus said, "He who does not gather with me will scatter." Matthew 12:30 emphasizes the mission of the church, the fellowship that goes out to gather.

If the understanding of *ekklesia* is left without a new meaning, the church can be trapped in purely institutional aspects. To *ekklesia* must attach a new meaning, namely *diakklesia*. The form of the church is a fellowship that transcends every barrier. That is the imaginative ecclesiology that the post-pandemic has to offer.

As a fellowship that transcends boundaries, the church must be able to place its presence as a fellowship that negotiates with outside itself, a church that understands that the presence of others is equal to itself. Without negotiation, the church can lose its missional role in the world. The church must also move into a relational fellowship. Realizing its mission in the world, the church must develop a relational nature in the world. The church exists in the world to build relationships that are not negating but those that are negotiating. Thus, the church became a hybrid. He relates to God as well as relates to the world.

Realizing the *diaklesia* aspect in the *ekklesia* above, the church must rely on the movement of faith as the postulate of Martin Luther. Above all, the church must have faith in God's work of solidarity revealed in the cross. The church uses such faith as the body of Christ to realize God's work of solidarity for the world. God's work in the Economic Trinity *Intra Deus*

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<sup>58</sup> Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 1975, 1:292.

<sup>59</sup> Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1976), 32.

*Revelatus* is the church's mission to the world. Moreover, at the same time, the church's faith in the Immanent Trinity *Intra Deus Absconditus* is the church's soul to avoid the aspect of superiority over creation.

*Diaklesia* in *ekklesia* makes the church not limited to just a named community. The church becomes a community that embodies God's work of solidarity for the world so that the world meets God. The church opens itself to the presence of the world so that the church meets the world. There is room for the world to experience God's work of solidarity in that encounter.

## **CONCLUSION**

We have outlined the imagination of the Church after the pandemic. This effort contributes to the church community that after the pandemic, the face of the Church will change. The Church is no longer limited to the community name. The identity of the Church will be manifest through its appearance in the world. The form of the proposed Church is *diakklesia*. The Church, which is present in hybrid with the world, does not negate the world; a church that relates to the world, a church that is committed to realizing God's work of solidarity for the world, and a church that recognizes that it exists in and with the world.

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