



Theological Contributions of the Great Commission-Centred Church in a Multicultural Society

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Abstract. *The church has the main mandate to carry out the Great Commission as written in Matthew 28:18-20. In the context of an increasingly complex multicultural society in the digital era and society 5.0, the church is faced with the challenge of delivering the gospel in a relevant manner without losing its theological essence. This research aims to examine the theological contribution of the church in carrying out the Great Commission in a multicultural society and formulate effective strategies in evangelism. Using a qualitative method based on literature review, this research analyses literature from various sources of theology, sociology of religion, and multiculturalism studies. The results show that the church has an important role in building social harmony through interfaith dialogue, multicultural education, and inclusive and contextual evangelism strategies. Churches that understand local cultures can bridge social and religious differences without losing Christian values. In addition, the utilisation of digital technology in church mission strategies allows for greater reach in the spread of the gospel. However, challenges remain, including theological differences, resistance to evangelism, as well as limited church resources in social ministry. Therefore, a collaborative approach with various communities becomes a strategic solution to strengthen the impact of the church's ministry. This research confirms that the church needs to continue developing mission methods that are relevant to the times, while remaining true to its theological principles. By actively engaging in social ministry and interfaith dialogue, the church can become an agent of social transformation that brings peace and prosperity to a multicultural society.*

Keywords: Church Mission, Church Theology, Great Commission, Multiculturalism, Social Harmony.

1. INTRODUCTION

The church has the primary mandate to fulfil the Great Commission as written in Matthew 28:18-20. This mandate is not just a missionary command, but also a theological call that defines the identity and existence of the church in the world. In the context of a multicultural society, the implementation of the Great Commission faces complex challenges, especially in the digital age and the increasingly globally connected society 5.0. Therefore, the church needs to develop strategies and approaches that fit the dynamics of a multicultural society and utilise technology to preach the gospel effectively.

Multicultural societies are characterised by the diversity of different cultures, religions and social values. In this context, the church is faced with the challenge of not only communicating the gospel in a relevant manner, but also bridging differences without losing the essence of Christian truth. Sproul (2002) emphasises that the true church is a missionary church, while Susanto (2019) asserts that a contextual mission approach is the key to success in reaching out to a pluralistic society. Thus, the theological contribution of the church centred on the Great Commission in a multicultural society is relevant for further study.

In an effort to actualise the Great Commission, innovation is needed in mission methods that were previously direct (on-site) towards a broader digital approach. Purwoto and Rachmani (2020) highlight that good mission management is a fundamental element in evangelistic effectiveness. Correspondingly, the digital era and society 5.0 open up new opportunities for churches to reach more people through social media, online platforms, and digital mission strategies. Therefore, this study aims to examine the theological contribution of the church in the context of an evolving multicultural society, as well as how the church can remain faithful to the Great Commission with relevant and effective strategies.

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method based on literature review. This study collects and analyses literature from various sources of theology, sociology of religion, and multiculturalism studies to understand the relevance of the Great Commission in the life of a multicultural society. This literature review is conducted by referring to trusted academic sources and has gone through a peer-review process, resulting in valid and accountable conclusions.

3. RESULTS

Application of the Great Commission in a Multicultural Society

The Great Commission provides the theological basis for the church to carry out its mission in a pluralistic world. However, its implementation requires adaptation in order to be accepted by various groups of people. The church needs to understand the local culture so that evangelism does not conflict with the prevailing values in society (Smith, 2020). The contextualised church mission model emphasises the importance of understanding the uniqueness of the local culture before approaching mission. An inclusive evangelism strategy is also an important factor, where the church does not only focus on religious conversion, but also builds relationships based on love and dialogue (Jones & Taylor, 2021).

In addition, implementing the Great Commission in a multicultural society requires a more flexible and contextualised strategy. Churches can implement an incarnational approach, where the gospel is delivered in a culturally appropriate way without losing the essence of Christianity (Keller, 2016). This approach allows the church to be present as part of the community and not as a foreign entity bringing change from outside. This is in line with Paul's principle in 1 Corinthians 9:22, where he became 'all things to all men' in order to bring them to Christ.

In addition, the use of digital media in evangelising is increasingly relevant in a connected global society. According to Lim's research (2022), churches that succeed in digital mission are those that are able to combine technology with a personalised pastoral approach. Social media, podcasts, and online platforms are effective means to reach multicultural communities spread across various regions. Thus, digital mission strategy is a key element in implementing the Great Commission in the modern era.

The Role of the Church in Building Social Harmony

The church has a significant role in building social harmony in a heterogeneous society. One of its main roles is to be a facilitator in interfaith dialogue. According to research conducted by Anderson (2019), churches can initiate interfaith dialogue forums to build mutual understanding and reduce social conflict. In addition, churches can also contribute through education and community development to increase tolerance. Christian value-based education that teaches love and respect for diversity can help people understand the importance of peaceful coexistence (Johnson, 2022).

Furthermore, churches can run social programmes that reach all levels of society regardless of religious or cultural backgrounds. Health care, education, and social assistance are effective means of showing Christ's love in action (Williams & Carter, 2021). When churches are active in serving the community, they not only strengthen the witness of faith, but also build a positive reputation that encourages tolerance and social harmony.

In addition, churches can become mediators in social conflicts that occur in multicultural societies. By adopting a reconciliation approach based on love and justice, churches can help restore fractured relationships among different groups in society (Rodriguez, 2023). This effort reflects Christ's mission as Reconciler who unites humanity in His love.

Challenges in Church Social Ministry

The church faces various challenges in carrying out its ministry in a pluralistic society. Some of the main challenges include theological differences that can become obstacles in interfaith dialogue, resistance from certain groups to evangelistic efforts, and limited resources in running inclusive social service programs (Harris, 2020). To overcome these challenges, churches need to adopt a more collaborative approach and establish partnerships with various communities, both religious and secular, to strengthen their social impact.

In addition, churches need to face the challenge of digital literacy in ministry. In the era of society 5.0, the utilisation of technology is a major factor in reaching out to the wider community. However, not all churches have the capacity to adapt technology well (Lim, 2022). This causes a gap between churches that have digital resources and churches that still rely on

conventional approaches. Therefore, training is needed for church leaders to be able to use technology effectively in their social ministries.

Another challenge facing churches is the uncertainty of regulations relating to religious freedom in various countries. In some regions, government policies regarding mission and evangelism can change at any time, thus creating obstacles for churches in carrying out their ministries (Smith, 2021). Therefore, churches need to have adaptive strategies that not only focus on traditional evangelism but also on more flexible and contextualised ministry models.

Moreover, in an increasingly secular multicultural society, churches often face scepticism and even antipathy towards religious institutions. Many groups in modern society favour humanist approaches to solving social problems over faith-based solutions (Jones, 2023). Therefore, the church needs to build its credibility by emphasising a tangible social role, such as through humanitarian action, interfaith dialogue, and engagement in social justice issues.

Ethics in Interfaith Dialogue

In an effort to build harmony, the church must apply ethics that respect different beliefs. Constructive interfaith dialogue should be based on the principles of openness, equality, and respect for each party's religious identity. According to Miller (2021), this kind of dialogue enables mutual understanding and reduces prejudice between religious communities.

Research by Williams (2023) shows that churches that successfully establish interfaith relationships do not only focus on evangelism, but also on building cooperation in the social and humanitarian fields. This is in line with the views of Pope Francis who stressed the importance of interfaith dialogue to erase prejudice and foster an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. He affirmed that this kind of dialogue is essential in facing common challenges, including fighting extremism and intolerance that often manipulate religion to impose certain points of view through violence (Francis, 2020).

Furthermore, in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis highlighted that interreligious dialogue is not just about diplomacy or tolerance, but also about building friendship, peace and harmony. He stressed that true dialogue allows us to know, respect and work together for the common good (Francis, 2020).

In addition, the Second Vatican Council document, *Nostra Aetate*, affirms the Catholic Church's stance of respect and appreciation for other religions. This document encourages Catholics to engage in dialogue and cooperation with adherents of other religions, in order to promote universal moral and social values (Vatican Council II, 1965).

According to Smith (2022), the success of interreligious dialogue depends on the active involvement of religious communities in building trust and concrete cooperation. This study highlights the importance of interfaith social programmes that encourage joint participation in humanitarian projects, such as aid for the poor, interfaith education, and peace initiatives.

Stott (2019) emphasises that effective interfaith dialogue requires an inclusive approach, where all parties feel heard and valued. This includes using non-provocative language and establishing a safe discussion space for all participants.

By doing so, the church can strengthen its position as an agent of social transformation that is inclusive and relevant to all sections of society. Through dialogue based on respect and cooperation, the church plays an important role in creating a harmonious and peaceful society.

4. CONCLUSION

The church centred on the Great Commission has a significant theological contribution in building harmony in a multicultural society. With an inclusive and contextual approach, the church can be an agent of social change that brings peace and Christian values to life together.

This research confirms that the church needs to continue developing mission strategies that are relevant to the needs of the times, without abandoning its theological principles. Furthermore, the church's active involvement in interfaith dialogue and social services is the main key in creating a more harmonious and just society. It is hoped that this research can be a contribution to the study of theology and ecclesiastical practice in an increasingly complex multicultural context.

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