



Theological Basis of Evangelism through Social Media: Answering the Great Commission in a Digital World

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ABSTRACT

The advancement of digital technology has revolutionized the way humans communicate and form communities, including in the context of Christian evangelism. This article aims to explore the theological basis of evangelism through social media by placing the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20) as the main foundation. By referring to the concept of *missio Dei*, the incarnation of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit, social media is understood as a new mission space that is relevant in the digital era. This study was conducted with a qualitative theological approach through a literature study of contemporary digital missiology and theology literature. In addition to the great opportunities offered, this article also highlights theological challenges such as the dangers of reducing the Gospel message, the ethics of media use, and the need for a genuine online community.

INTRODUCTION

Social media, as an integral part of modern human life, cannot be ignored by the church in fulfilling the Great Commission. Theological studies show that evangelism through social media is not only doctrinally valid, but also very contextually relevant. The Great Commission calls the church to “go,” and in this era, “going” can mean entering the digital world where many people are. Principles such as *missio Dei*, the incarnation of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit provide a strong foundation for viewing the digital space as a mission field. However, the church is also challenged to maintain the authenticity of the Gospel message, avoid reducing spirituality, and build a true community in cyberspace. With a theological, contextual, and ethical approach, the church can use social media not just as a communication tool, but as a strategic means of expanding the Kingdom of God in the digital world.

Therefore, this article aims to examine the theological basis of evangelism through social media with a systematic approach, analyzing the legitimacy of digital mission in the light of the Great Commission and key concepts such as *missio Dei*, incarnation, and the work of the Holy Spirit. The principles of incarnational theology provide a solid foundation for this approach. Just as Christ became incarnate in the human world to communicate God's love and truth, the church is also called to become incarnate digitally, to be actively and authentically present in the virtual spaces where humanity now dwells.

In the midst of these changes, the church is faced with the challenge of making the mission of evangelism relevant to the digital context. Evangelism through social media is not just a technological adaptation, but a new form of the church's mission to enter the 'digital public space' and present the Gospel contextually.

In the past two decades, social media has become an inseparable part of human life. According to reports, more than 5 billion people use social media worldwide. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become the main means of communication for the global community, including the younger generation who are increasingly moving away from traditional church communication patterns.

Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19-20, known as the Great Commission, is the main foundation of Christian evangelism. This command is not limited by space and time, but applies across generations and cultures. The commission emphasizes that the church's task is to reach 'all nations', including modern society living in the digital world.

Although some previous studies have discussed the use of social media in the context of church and digital communication (Campbell & Garner, 2016; Hutchings, 2017), most of these studies emphasize the technical, social, and behavioral aspects of digital communication, rather than from a systematic theological perspective in depth. Even in works such as **Digital Religion** or **Creating Church Online**, the approach taken tends to be descriptive and phenomenological, rather than normative-theological. Therefore, there is still a significant research gap in

explaining how theological foundations such as the Great Commission, *missio Dei*, incarnation, and the work of the Holy Spirit can be used as the foundation for evangelism through social media. This study aims to fill this gap with a systematic theological approach that is rooted in the Bible and relevant to the challenges of the digital era.

METHODS

This article uses a qualitative theological method through a literature study approach. Data were collected from various systematic theology literature, missiology, and contemporary writings on digital theology. This research is analytical-reflective in nature to highlight theological principles that can be applied in the practice of digital evangelism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Great Commission as the Theological Foundation of Evangelism

The Great Commission in Matthew 28:19–20 is the most important theological basis for evangelism practice. Jesus commanded his disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations.” This command is not optional, but rather a divine mandate that must be continued by the church throughout time. In today’s digital context, “going” can also be interpreted as “entering” the virtual world where many people now interact and form communities.

In the *missio Dei* framework, the church is God’s instrument for presenting His kingdom in the world, including the digital world. Mission is not just an activity of the church, but part of God’s own sending nature. Therefore, when the church uses social media to proclaim the gospel, it is not just a technological

innovation, but a participation in God’s mission.

Social Media and the Incarnation: God Greets in Context

The concept of the incarnation in John 1:14 states that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” This provides a strong foundation for contextual evangelism presenting the gospel in the language and culture that people understand. In this case, digital culture is one form of culture that is currently dominating contemporary human life.

Campbell explains that the digital world is not just an artificial space, but a new “space of spiritual experience,” where humanity seeks meaning, community, and spirituality. When the church is actively present on social media, it imitates the incarnational action of Christ: being present among the people, understanding them, and speaking their language.

This principle encourages the church to not just mechanically move content to social media, but to contextualize the gospel message in creative and relevant ways. Horsfield states that throughout history, the church has always utilized the dominant communication medium in conveying the gospel from manuscripts, pulpits, radio, to today’s social media. The incarnation encourages the church to understand how the digital society thinks and communicates.

However, this incarnational approach requires the church to maintain the authenticity of the gospel message. In the pursuit of relevance, there is a danger of adapting too much to the point of losing the core of truth. Therefore, contextual theology must remain rooted in the whole

gospel, not be tempted by viral formats or trending content alone.

The Presence of the Holy Spirit in Digital Space

The Holy Spirit is the primary agent in the work of evangelism (Acts 1:8). He is not only present in physical meetings, but also works freely beyond the boundaries of space and time. In this context, the presence of the Holy Spirit in social media ministry opens up new perspectives on how God's power touches the hearts of people through digital means.

Social media has proven to be an effective means of reaching youth and young adults, the most digitally active groups. Testimonies of faith, short devotionals, and worship videos have been used by God to touch many souls, including those who have never been to church before.

Digital spiritual ministry can still be sacred if it is done with awareness of God's presence and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The church must treat the digital space as a new altar where prayer, worship, and the proclamation of the word can take place meaningfully. However, it must be remembered that the presence of the Holy Spirit cannot be forced by technology. Digital evangelism must remain based on a life of prayer, sincerity, and spiritual integrity. Technology is only a means, the true work of transformation is still done by the Holy Spirit who convicts and renews human hearts.

Theological Challenges in Social Media Evangelism

One of the biggest challenges in digital evangelism is the reduction of the gospel message to fast-paced content. In the social media ecosystem, content must be short, engaging, and viral in order to reach a wide audience. This creates a dilemma between theological depth and visual appeal. The church is challenged to convey the gospel in a concise yet meaningful and complete way.

Algorithm dependence is also a serious issue. Many churches and digital ministers rely on “engagement” as a measure of success, when in fact the success of the gospel is determined by the transformation of hearts, not the number of likes or shares. Social media algorithms may drive popular content but that doesn't mean it has a spiritual impact.

Another challenge is the loss of genuine relationships and community. Evangelism is not just about sharing the good news, but also about making disciples. Discipleship requires deep, ongoing relationships, while social media tends to encourage shallow, fleeting relationships.

Ethical issues also need to be addressed. Misuse of personal data, spiritual hoaxes, and excessive self-image can tarnish the testimony of the Gospel. The importance of building responsible and theological digital ethics, so that the church remains a light in a cyber world full of manipulation and distraction.

CONCLUSION

Social media, as an integral part of modern human life, cannot be ignored by the church in fulfilling the Great Commission. Theological studies show that evangelism through social media is not only doctrinally valid, but also very contextually relevant. The Great Commission calls the church to “go,” and in this era, “going” can mean entering the digital world where many people are.

Principles such as *missio Dei*, the incarnation of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit provide a strong foundation for viewing the digital space as a mission field. However, the church is also challenged to maintain the authenticity of the Gospel message, avoid reducing spirituality, and build a true community in cyberspace.

With a theological, contextual, and ethical approach, the church can use social media not just as a communication tool, but as a strategic means of expanding the Kingdom of God in the digital world.

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