

PASTORAL THEOLOGY RELEVANT FOR CONTEMPORARY INDONESIA**Minta Jernih Ndruru*, Deniel Susanto**

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Cipanas, Indonesia

Email: mintajernihndruru20@gmail.com*, daniel.susanto@ymail.com

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Accepted 27 th March 2025	<i>Pastoral theology plays a crucial role in responding to social and spiritual challenges in Indonesia, particularly in the context of the increasing divorce rate. This article examines the relevance of pastoral theology in addressing family and marriage issues in Indonesia. Although divorce is undesirable, it is a reality that must be pastorally addressed through a holistic and love-based approach. This study explores the various causes of divorce, the pastoral theological perspective on marriage, and relevant pastoral care methods to support families in crisis. The church is expected to actively provide spiritual guidance, counseling, and social support for congregants facing marital challenges. By integrating biblical teachings with a contextual pastoral approach, church ministry can be more effective in strengthening family resilience and fostering a more harmonious community.</i>
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INTRODUCTION

Before discussing Pastoral Theology that is relevant today, the author will explain the current situation in Indonesia, where people are currently living in the midst of a situation where attacks are so powerful to destroy many marriages. There are many temptations to married couples who eventually decide to divorce and forget the bonds of marriage vows that they once pledged before God and the congregation for both Christian and non-Christian couples (Anderson, 2017; Mathews & Hubbard, 2010). The problem of divorce knows no nation, ethnicity, country, culture, or religion; it must have data on divorce. Marriage failure followed by divorce is one of the many facts that occur in human life. The failure to resolve conflicts that occur between husband and wife is the problem of the practice of divorce (Toraja, 2020). Ruth Schafer and Freshia Aprilyn Ross, as quoted by Kalis Stevanus, state that the failure of the husband-wife relationship is the first and main problem and that reality is at least indirectly influenced by the presence or absence of permission to divorce or the practice of separation, the desire for divorce is the result rather than the cause of the failure of the relationship (Cumbo, 2023; Setiawan et al., 2021).

Divorce is a serious problem because the fact is that divorce always happens. In this case, divorce is a matter that deserves attention (Ajayi, 2016). Although never formally approved by the church, the issue of divorce can also be found and occurs in the midst of Christian and non-Christian families (Banungwiiri, 2021; Cowart, 2024). Another problem is when divorced couples tell the church, and some divorce secretly (Hutagalung, 2015). In this case, the church is required to be more sensitive to this issue, not only in a narrow sense but in a broad sense. In the awareness of the changing aspects of the lives of God's people, the various problems that exist in the family, and the confusion of church leaders on how to present the true church in the midst of this problem, church leaders or pastors must think about how to continue and the future of their ministry as a broad church (Maggang, 2021). As an effort to formulate pastoral theology in the unique context of plural Indonesia, the author will discuss First Recognizing Divorce Cases in the context of Pastoral Theology in Indonesia, second the definition of pastoral theology, and third, Pastoral Theology methods that are relevant today, Fourth: how to model the right service today (Huynh & Nguyen, 2020).

This research focuses on pastoral care that is relevant to contemporary Indonesia. To clarify the direction of the research, two main questions were formulated, namely: what pastoral theology is relevant for today's Indonesia, and what are its implications? The purpose of this research is to know and understand the form of pastoral theology that is suitable for the current Indonesian context, examine its implications, and add to the author's insight as part of the requirements for entering the master's program at STT Cipanas. In general, this research is useful theoretically as a contribution of thought for pastors, pastors, and practitioners in formulating contextual pastoral theology, as well as practically supporting church services in the lives of families, fellowships, and society in Indonesia today (Situmorang et al., 2024).

The current research advances existing studies by proposing a contextual pastoral theology model tailored specifically for Indonesia, addressing the gap between Western-derived frameworks and local socio-cultural realities, particularly in handling marital crises and divorce. Unlike prior works that focus on individual pastoral care Karolina (2024) or general theological ethics (Stivers & Evans, 2005), this study emphasizes holistic, community-integrated approaches (e.g., *koinonia*, *diakonia*) and critiques the narrow, individualistic pastoral methods inherited from Western pietism (Susanto, 2015). It also introduces empirical analysis of Indonesian divorce trends (BPS, 2023) and advocates for culturally adaptive pastoral strategies, bridging biblical principles with local wisdom (Anggui, 2020), which earlier studies like Setiawan (2022) and Paraibabo (2021) did not fully explore. Additionally, it expands Banawiratma's (2020) transformative pastoral agenda by incorporating gender justice, interfaith dynamics, and post-divorce care into its framework, offering a more comprehensive response to Indonesia's pluralistic challenges.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive analysis method to describe the divorce phenomenon in the context of pastoral care. Data were collected through literature study to analyze relevant theories of pastoral theology and direct observation of pastoral practices in Indonesian churches today. Data on divorce in Indonesia and pastoral approaches that churches have implemented were analyzed, including case studies that demonstrate pastoral care in assisting families in crisis. The results show that pastoral theology is relevant in answering the challenges of family and marriage in Indonesia. With a love-based, holistic, and contextual approach, church services can be more effective in assisting families facing life crises.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Divorce in the Context of Pastoral Theology in Indonesia

The relevant pastoral theology in Indonesia that the author will discuss is a divorce in the family. Divorce is something that is not allowed because this is something that God does not like (Hidayati, 2021; Rodliyah, 2014). Sometimes, divorce is just a trivial result, misunderstanding or not fundamental. But the reality is that the divorce rate is increasing significantly day by day. For this reason, the author will first discuss several divorce cases in Indonesia.

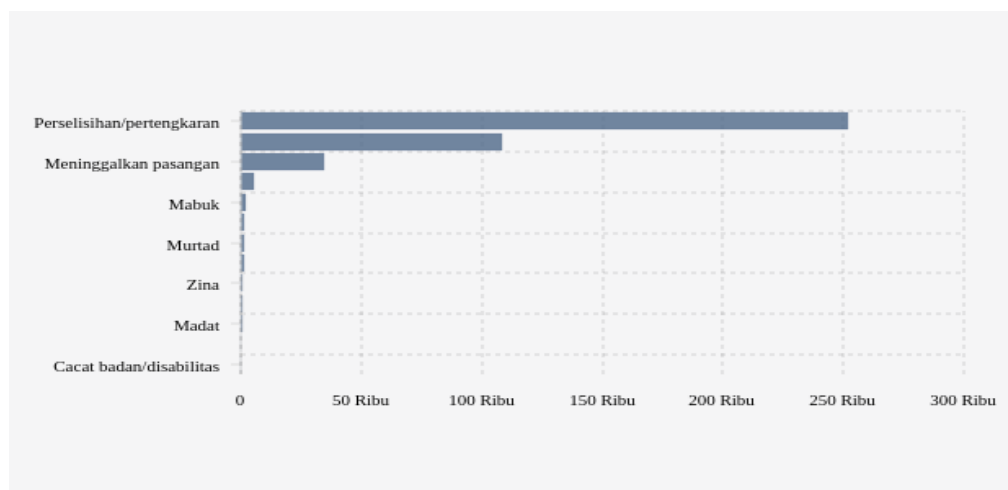


Figure 1. Divorces in Indonesia in 2023, due to disputes and forced marriages

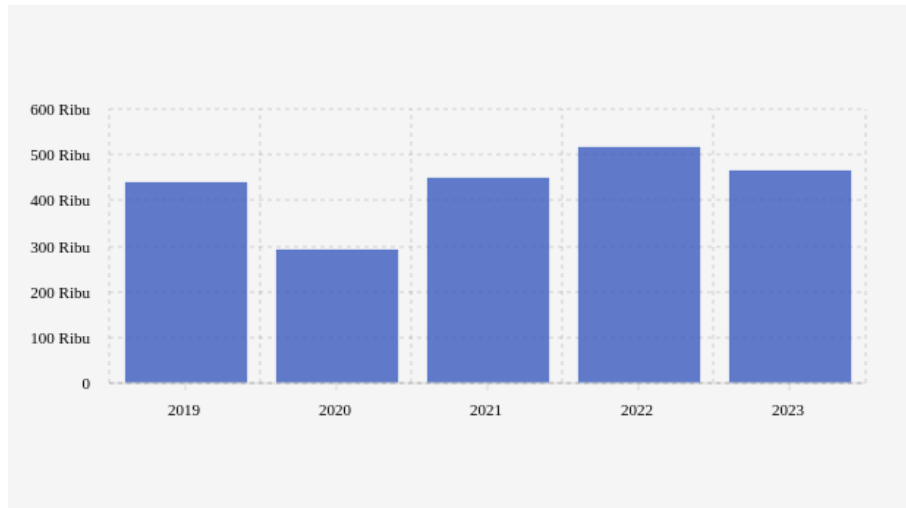


Figure 2. Divorce Cases in Indonesia to Drop in 2023, First Since the Pandemic

According to data from the Director General of Religious Courts of the Supreme Court compiled by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), 408,347 divorces occurred throughout 2023. The figure is down 10.20% compared to 2022 (year-on-year/yoy), which saw 516,344 divorces. In 2023, disputes and quarrels were the main cause of divorce in Indonesia, with 251,828 cases or 61.67% of the total divorce cases in the country. There were also many divorces caused by economic problems (108,488 cases), one party leaving their spouse (34,322 cases), domestic violence (5,174 cases), and drunkenness (1,752 cases).

Then there were gambling problems (1,572 cases), apostasy or leaving the religion (1,415 cases), prison sentences (1,271 cases), and adultery (780 cases). There were also divorces triggered by polygamy (738 cases), madam (384 cases), forced marriage (314 cases), and disability (209 cases). By region, the most divorces in 2023 were in West Java (48,812 cases), Central Java (36,618 cases), and East Java (35,940 cases). Meanwhile, the least divorces were in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) with 471 cases throughout 2023. All of this divorce data was obtained from the number of divorce certificates printed as of February 6, 2024.

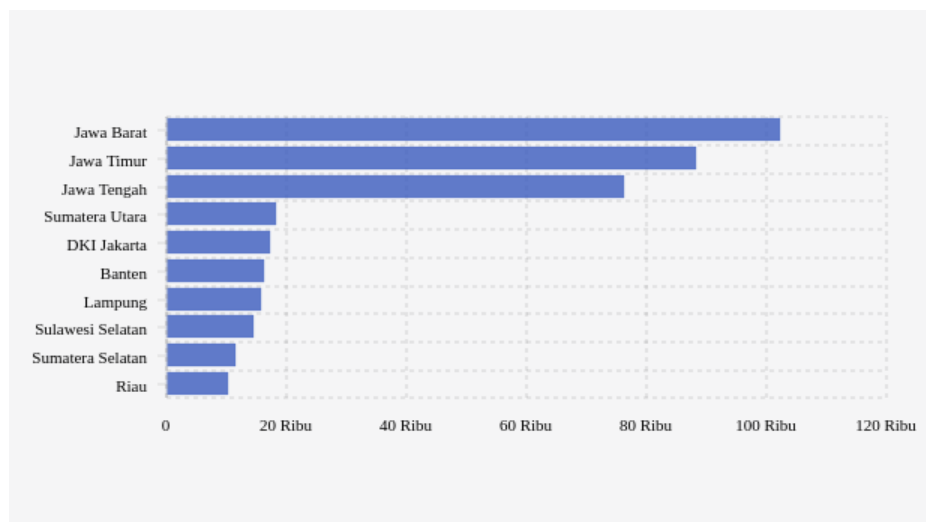


Figure 3. West Java, the Province with the Highest Divorce Cases in 2023

Based on the Statistics Indonesia report, throughout 2023, there were 463,654 divorce cases in Indonesia. This figure is down 10.2% compared to the previous year, which amounted to 516,334 cases. In 2023, West Java became the province with the highest number of divorce cases in Indonesia, with 102,280 cases or 22.06% of the total national divorce cases. East Java took second place with 88,213 divorce cases, followed by Central Java with 76,367 cases, and North Sumatra with 18,269 cases. East

Nusa Tenggara has the lowest divorce cases nationally, followed by West Papua, Maluku, and North Kalimantan. Last year, only four provinces did not have records of divorce cases, namely Southwest Papua, South Papua, Central Papua, and Papua Mountains.

Here is a complete list of the number of divorce cases in Indonesia by province in 2023, from highest to lowest: West Java: 102,280 cases, East Java: 88,213 cases, Central Java: 76,367 cases, North Sumatra: 18,269 cases, DKI Jakarta: 17,263 cases, Banten: 16,158 cases, Lampung: 15,784 cases, South Sulawesi: 14,612 cases, South Sumatra: 11,450 cases, Riau: 10,141 cases, West Sumatra: 92.66 cases, West Nusa Tenggara: 84.98 cases, East Kalimantan: 82.41 cases, South Kalimantan: 72.73 cases, Aceh: 6,944 cases, DI Yogyakarta: 5,812 cases, West Kalimantan: 5,768 cases, Jambi: 5,089 cases, Southeast Sulawesi: 4,313 cases, Central Sulawesi: 4,123 cases, Bengkulu: 4,105 cases, Riau Islands: 3,952 cases, Central Kalimantan: 3,757 cases, Bangka Belitung Islands: 2,528 cases, Gorontalo: 2,430 cases, North Sulawesi: 2,153 cases, Papua: 1,453 cases, North Maluku: 1,347 cases, Bali: 1,335 cases, West Sulawesi: 1,304 cases, North Kalimantan: 1,218 cases, Maluku: 951 cases, West Papua: 636 cases, East Nusa Tenggara: 621 cases, Southwest Papua: 0 cases, South Papua: 0 cases, Central Papua: 0 cases, Papua Mountains: 0 cases. The majority of divorces in Indonesia in 2023 will be contested divorces, which are divorces filed by the wife and decided by the court. The number reached 352,403 cases or 76% of the total national divorce cases. Then, 111,251 cases, or 24% of divorces, occurred due to divorce filed by the husband and decided by the court.

The number of divorces due to domestic violence (KDRT) in DKI Jakarta was recorded at 178 cases as of 2023. This figure increased compared to 2022 and was lower than December 2021. The growth over the last five years in this region shows a decline of -11.51%. Historically, the increase in the number of divorces due to domestic violence (KDRT) this year recorded a higher growth rate than the previous year. As for the track record of the last six years, this province has recorded the highest growth of 40.12%, which occurred in 2021. Meanwhile, the lowest growth occurred in 2019 at -60%.

Compared to 34 other provinces, the latest data published by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in December 2023 placed DKI Jakarta province in ninth place nationally. The following are the ten provinces with the largest number of divorces due to domestic violence (KDRT) nationally in 2023, namely: Indonesia, 5,174 cases, East Java, 1,636 cases, West Java, 442 cases, South Sulawesi, 333 cases, South Sumatra, 259 cases, West Nusa Tenggara 240 cases, Central Java 235 cases, Banten 224 cases, DKI Jakarta 178 cases, Southeast Sulawesi 170 cases.

According to a report by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), throughout 2022, there were 516,334 divorce cases in Indonesia that had been decided by the court. The figure only includes divorces of couples who are Muslim. As many as 75.21% or 388,358 divorce cases recorded by BPS were contested divorces, namely divorce cases filed by the wife or her legal representative. Then 24.79% or 127,986 other cases were divorce cases, which are divorce cases filed by the husband or his legal representative. The BPS report also shows that the trend of divorce cases has continued to increase since the Covid-19 pandemic. Likewise, divorce cases have also increased, although the increase is not as large as that of a contested divorce. The magnitude of the upward trend in contested divorce and divorce will cause divorce cases in Indonesia to spike again in 2022, even reaching the highest number in the last six years.

In the explanation above it is very clear that in Indonesia there are still many divorce cases that occur. There are many who think that divorce is a common thing in the family. Even with reasons that may or may not be serious, it triggers divorce cases. In this situation, it is actually important for pastoral theology to be present in the midst of society with the method of correlating approaches to biblical truth.

The Theological Basis of Christian Marriage

Marriage is part of God's plan for mankind, in which God takes the initiative to provide and bring together a person with a life partner. Marriage is also a holy and sacred ordinance established by God Himself, in which God grants a special fellowship between husband and wife to live together as a source of mutual benefit. Marriage is God's idea and creation. Therefore, God has set rules for marriage: First, in Monogamy, a man is only allowed to marry one woman (Gen 1:27-28, 2:22). This principle opposes the sin of polygamy and polyandry.¹⁰ Second, in Heterosexuality, a man must marry a woman (Gen 1:26-28; 2:21-25).

This principle opposes homosexual sin because same-sex marriage is a fundamental violation of marriage. You shall not lie with a man as one lies with a woman, for it is an abomination (Lev 18:22).

Third, chastity, a man may only be joined to his wife and vice versa (Gen 2:24). This principle rejects the sin of fornication and adultery (1 Corinthians 7:1-5). Fourth, for life, marriage can only be separated by death (Rom 7:2,3). This principle opposes the sin of divorce (Mal 2:16; Mt 19:6). The Bible is very clear about the duration of marriage, which is a lifelong commitment until death do us part. Fifth, Seiman. Both must love the Lord Jesus and have the same vision (2 Cor 6:14). This principle rejects marriages of different religions. Sixth, Abandon and merge, In marriage, the man and woman must abandon their dependence on their parents and merge with their legal spouse so that the two become one flesh (Gen 2:24).

Views on Divorce

In the book Christian Ethics

While some churches may allow divorce, in general, the Christian perspective affirms that marriage is an indissoluble bond between a man and a woman. Marriage is considered a covenant designed to last forever until death separates a couple united through marriage. In his book "Seasons of Marriage" written by H. Norman Wright, several factors that can lead to divorce are described. First, it is caused by a couple's inability to understand changes in each other's attitudes and behavior, which may appear in the early stages of their marriage but, if not properly addressed, can become serious problems in the marriage. Secondly, when the foundation of the marriage is not solid and cannot develop the individuals involved, it can easily collapse. A strong foundation is the result of understanding and applying the principles in God's Word so that marriage becomes something that is respected and appreciated by the couple. Thirdly, divorce can occur when one's expectations do not match reality, especially when those expectations are based on unrealistic images of marriage, such as in fairy tales. In summarizing H. Norman Wright's statement, divorce arises from the lack of maturity of the individuals undergoing marriage due to a lack of understanding of the principles in God's Word. Therefore, divorce is often seen as the result of individual decisions rather than simply being part of God's plan.

In ancient Roman culture, divorce was permitted for both men and women, with no interference from other institutions, including government and religion. Divorce was considered a basic individual right, so the decision of the couple was their personal business. Even so, the granting of divorce papers still had to go through procedures established by the state. Something similar occurs in Jewish culture, where divorce is common, but generally, only the husband has the right to divorce the wife and grant divorce papers. In contrast, the wife does not have the right to protest against the husband's decision to divorce her.

Divorce According to Experts

According to Subekti, divorce is the abolition of marriage with the decision of the judges of the demands of one of the parties to the marriage. According to R. Soetojo, Prawirohamidjojo and Safioedin, divorce is different from the termination of marriage after the separation of the table and bed in which there is no dispute and there is even the will of both husband and wife to terminate the marriage. Divorce is always based on a dispute between husband and wife. According to P.N.H. Simanjuntak Divorce is the end of a marriage based on a judge's decision on the claim of one of the parties or both parties.

Church leaders' views on divorce

Both Martin Luther and John Calvin saw marriage as a holy social institution blessed by God that involves a relationship of love and promise between a man and a woman. Martin Luther said that marriage is not a matter for the church; however, the church is responsible for shepherding married couples. Marriage and divorce are matters of the world that should be left to secular law. Martin Luther allowed divorce to take place in Christian marital life on the basis of several conditions as well."

- A. Adultery is when a partner who is bound in marriage is found to be adulterous and unfaithful to their legal spouse. Impotence is when a spouse is unable to perform his or her role as a sexual being and does not view sex as something dirty.
- B. Refusal to perform marital roles and responsibilities.

John Calvin viewed the institution of marriage as a once-in-a-lifetime event, and the only thing that could destroy it was a sin against the institution itself. John Calvin even set up a divorce

law in the city of Jenewe in 1561, showing that the church gave couples the opportunity to divorce legally, which was in line with Luther's provisions.

Desiderius Erasmus, a theologian of the Roman Catholic Church, allowed divorce to take place if one spouse committed acts of hatred and cruelty against the other. William Tyndale saw marriage not as a human idea but as God's idea of the realization of love, companionship, procreation, and sexual fidelity. For Tyndale, adultery and neglect were exceptions to divorce. **'Jarot Wijanarko, Free and Healed from Divorce (Jakarta_ SUARA PEMULIHAN, 2020), 64 - Google Search' <[https://doi.org/Jarot Wijanarko, Free and Healed from Divorce \(Jakarta: SUARA PEMULIHAN, 2020\), 64](https://doi.org/Jarot%20Wijanarko,%20Free%20and%20Healed%20from%20Divorce%20(Jakarta:%20SUARA%20PEMULIHAN,%202020),%2064)>.**

The Bible's view on divorce

Old Testament

The book of Deuteronomy chapter 24:1-3 talks about Moses' decision to give a license to divorce his wife. "Certificate of divorce: in ancient Israel, it was easy for a husband to divorce his wife even though there had to be a reason. If the widow married another man, the husband who had divorced her could not remarry her, even if the second husband was dead. This was to prevent men from rushing into a decision to write divorce papers. This law can bring sin upon the land.

It can be concluded that the main discussion of this verse is about the position of women and marriage according to custom, the principles of marriage in brief, the protection of women who their husbands slander, and the problems that arise as a result of divorce. From the verse that has been presented above, it does not provide instructions on how to conduct a divorce in Malachi. 2:16, in this chapter, the LORD scolded the Israelites because they intermarried; they did things that displeased the LORD. They were unfaithful to their wives, so in verse 16, the LORD says, "For I hate divorce." The LORD has never approved of divorce from then until now, and forever, He hates divorce because it is not His will.

New Testament

In Matthew. 19:6, Jesus says, "Therefore they are no longer two but one; therefore what God has joined together, let no man put asunder". The marriage bond in the Christian faith established by God is a lifelong bond. It is God who takes the initiative to unite husband and wife and also on the authority of Jesus. He establishes marriage through the church. This marriage is not temporary but lifelong until death separates, so Jesus never wants a divorce.

Of the four Gospels, the only exception to divorce is found in the Gospel of Matthew. It contrasts with chapter 19:6. Chapter 5:32 shows that Jesus allowed people to divorce on the grounds of adultery. Some commentators say: "In verse 31, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 24. Many commentaries are widely used, both ancient and more recent, in line with this, most of these commentaries go on to explain that Jesus was changing or improving what was expressed in the law of Moses." This verse is about the regulations found in Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

Paul advised the Corinthians: To those who are married I do not, but the Lord commands, that a wife should not divorce her husband (1 Cor 7:10-11). Even if a brother has an unbelieving wife and she wants to live with him, let him not divorce her. Likewise, if a wife has an unbeliever for a husband and he wants to live with her, let her not divorce him (1 Corinthians 7:12-13). Apostle Paul condemned divorce. By saying this, the apostle Paul indirectly condemned every divorce practiced by the people of that day.

The Development of Pastoral Theology

The development of Protestant pastoral theology began during the German Reformation when the concern for the cure of souls emerged. The early Protestants thought that the sacrament of absolution was a misunderstanding in which the believer's actions after confession pleased God and caused him to be forgiven. As for the pastor, his office gave him the power to grant forgiveness or not on behalf of God. Luther's objection was not to confession or absolution as such but to man's control over God.

According to the Reformers, the church in the world is to be understood primarily as an "assembly of believers" who, by God's grace, will naturally care for each other: praising God, looking after and helping each other, and proclaiming the Word to their fellow human beings. So it is the human spirit that is concerned in the church. So we have Pauck's conclusion about the nature of Protestantism: a

spiritual attitude rooted in a living faith that God became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth and revealed Himself in new lives and thoughts that reflect that faith as a proclamation of the glory of God beyond all human limitations and sufficiency.

The Early Centuries of Protestantism

The first use of the term Pastoral Theology in Protestantism did not appear until the 18th century. Historically, the attention given to pastoral theology occurred only in the period of one hundred and fifty years, and it has only been fully recognized as a science for less than a century. Its history is associated with Seelsorge, or the care and healing of souls. Much of Seelsorge is devoted to "discipline" and is not a direct part of Pastoral Theology, although it is an important function of the church and pastor.

Pastoral theology in the 16th century was concerned with attitudes and motivations. Pastoral care first of all requires a Christian shepherd with all its consequences. The shepherd must be gentle and sensitive to those who need sensitivity, even if he is harsh with those in other situations.

In the 17th century, Richard Baxter, in his book entitled "The Reformed Pastor," demanded a sense of responsibility from the pastor towards his congregation. Pastors who did not have a sense of responsibility were strongly criticized. However, there is a weak point in Baxter's move to all situations with an attitude of being able to respond to their needs, e.g., shepherding, sometimes teaching, at other times, rebuke or correction.

A. Protestantism in the Early Centuries

A prominent fact about pastoralism in the late 18th and early 19th centuries was the influence of Pietism. Some Pietists and evangelicals valued the importance of pastoral ministry, but they felt compelled to contrast it with theology when they did so. In the year, Koster divided "pastoral science" into four functions: Liturgy, Seelsorge, Homiletics, and Catechetics.

Sheedd of Auburn and Union Theological Seminaries views pastoral theology as the study of the pastor's visitation, teaching, personal life, prayer, and reasoning. "There have been many struggles and tensions between the use of psychotherapy on the one hand and the use of theology on the other. (Pastoral figures such as Seward Wiltner, Wayne Oates, Paul Johnson, Carroll Wise, and later Howard Clinebell have sought to emphasize theology and church tradition in shaping the foundational stance of pastoral ministry alone.

B. The Pastoral Care of the Church Today and Its Direction into the 21st Century

Clinebell, in his famous book, which has been translated into many languages, including Indonesian, "The Basic Types of Pastoral and Counseling," points out the following tendencies:

1. Counseling is the only paradigm for the pastoral care of the church.
2. A move away from focusing only on crises and problems, pastoral churches can also see the positive and nurturing in ongoing activities.
3. There is a renewed emphasis on the importance of the Christian theological tradition, along with a concern for spirituality and ethics as resources and critical elements in the pastoral care of the church.
4. The new emphasis on the Christian community as the context of pastoral care and the role of the laity as active participants in pastoral care differs from the past, which separated the laity only as objects of psychotherapeutic services from the clergy.
5. a new emphasis on the wider social and political context and its implications for pastoral care.

In this Post-Modern era, church pastoral is threatened to be unfaithful to the doctrines or rules of the Christian church because pastoral problem-solving will always be linked to the context, not looking for right or wrong, good or evil, but whether the healing is suitable or not suitable for the context. As the author will discuss, this case is about divorce.

Thus, there is evidence that the changes that occur in society also affect the pastoral development of the church in the past, present, and future. If so, as pastoral officers, we should always be responsive to change. However, keep in mind that church pastoralists must be more critical in responding to changes that occur in society so that church pastoralists remain superior and relevant in their efforts to serve the people.

Thus, the development of pastoral theology in Indonesia is influenced by the development of Western pastoral theology. This is because the birth of Christianity in Indonesia was largely the result

of evangelization from Western evangelists, especially in Europe. Therefore, the style of Western theology was still very strong, and colored pastoral theology in Indonesia at the beginning of its development. Indonesian pastoral theologians realize the importance of formulating pastoral theology in the Indonesian context. This is a challenge. The stark cultural differences between the West and the East make it even more unique.

This condition creates and demands a hard struggle in trying to formulate a pastoral theology that is relevant for Indonesia based on the richness of the socio-cultural context in Indonesia. In Asia it has long been believed that taking Western theology for granted or theologizing in a Western way is no longer appropriate in seeking an understanding of faith in Asia, including in Indonesia. As an attempt to formulate pastoral theology in the unique context of plural Indonesia, we will discuss first: the Indonesian situation that needs to be observed for pastoral theology today, second: the concept of divorce, third: the definition of pastoral theology, and fourth: the model of relevant pastoral theology, and third: pastoral theology in the unique Indonesian context.

Definition of Pastoral Theology

Pastoral theology is a branch of theological science that focuses on a pastoral perspective on all activities and functions of the church and Pastor, then draws theological conclusions from the observations made. Harianto (2021) quoted Samuel Southard's view that pastoral theology lays out: 1) pastoral issues that can be systematically logicalized with a framework between ethical decisions and the basis of faith, 2) try to describe biblical values as the basis for pastoral issues, 3) explain the relationship of salvation grace as a personal responsibility. Yakub Susabda explained about pastoral counseling related to theology: Pastoral counseling services must be theologically based but still integrated with the contribution of other sciences, especially psychology. The theological aspect that is meant is when the servant of God or Pastor as a counselor is able to use the truth of God's Word not only when he speaks or handles spiritual matters, but in every part of his counseling (attitude, response, approach methods, advice, interpretation, etc.) even in any issue. The truth of God's Word revealed through the Bible must be the absolute standard of truth.

Being a pastor is not the same as being a psychologist, doctor or psychiatrist (unless he has a formal educational background in these fields, therefore the uniqueness of pastoral ministry does not lie in the ability to use the contributions of psychology, techniques and methods of approach from these disciplines. Jhon Patton explains that the term pastoral refers to a nurturing and caring attitude (Patton, 2019).

According to J.R. Burck and R.J. Hunter, there are at least three different understandings of pastoral theology among Protestant Christians. First, traditionally, pastoral theology is seen as a branch of theology that formulates principles, theories, and practical procedures for the ministry of the pastor in all its functions (although in the 19th century homiletics was often excluded). In this understanding the ministry of the pastor becomes the focus or center of attention of pastoral theology.

Secondly, pastoral theology is the field of practical theological study on the theory and practice of pastoral (or: shepherding) ministry and counseling. In addition to the study of methods of helping and healing, this field of study also includes the study of moral and religious life and development, personality theory, inter-personal and family relationships, and special issues such as illness, grief, and guilt.

Third, pastoral theology is a form of theological reflection in which pastoral experience serves as a context for the critical development of fundamental theological notions. Pastoral theology, in this sense, focuses its attention on subjects such as illness, death, sexuality, family, personal life, and theological topics considered from a pastoral perspective such as faith, hope, love, salvation, and God. According to Sutanto here pastoral theology is not seen as a theology of shepherding, but a type of contextual theology: an attempt at theology done pastorally. Pastoral theology in this sense will complement other notions of pastoral theology.

Here pastoral theology is not seen as a theology of shepherding, but a type of contextual theology: an attempt at theology done pastorally. Pastoral theology in this sense will complement other notions of pastoral theology. Pastoral theologians' views on pastoral theology, both in the world and in Indonesia, are also not the same. Some theologians have an understanding of pastoral theology in the first sense, some in the second sense, and some in the third sense. Hommes says, "As a theological discipline, it has something in common with other theological disciplines, namely the attempt to reflect critically on the existence of God, including reflecting on God's actions in the world and in human

history." As a theological discipline it also seeks to understand the mystery of the universe and the mystery of man. However, pastoral theology remains unique in that it focuses on pastoral matters and Christian ministry.

Hiltner also explains that pastoral theology is defined as a branch or field of theological knowledge and inquiry that directs a pastoral perspective to all activities and functions of the church and pastor and then draws theological conclusions from reflection on these observations. Hiltner argues that pastoral theology is generated from a pastoral perspective. This means that pastoral theology is not centered on theory but on activity. Hiltner argues that pastoral theology is generated by inquiry from a pastoral perspective.

Bons-Storm describes shepherding as follows: "(a) To seek out and visit the members of the congregation one by one; (b) To preach the word of God to them, in their personal life situation; (c) To minister to them, just as Jesus ministered to them; (d) So that they may become more aware of their faith, and be able to manifest that faith in their daily lives." ³⁹ Bons-Storm further states the following. ³⁹ Bons-Storm goes on to say the following:

"Practical theology: whether homiletics (the science of preaching), or the science of Christian education (kaketik) or pastoral science, all wrestle with the following issue. How can the good news of God and His covenant with Israel be conveyed to people living today in their own unique situations? How can the gospel be truly good news, news so meaningful to concrete human life that it can define and influence human beings throughout their lives?

Martin Bucer's similar explanation, quoted by Tidbal, is as follows: "Bringing the alienated to Christ. Restoring those who have gone astray. Obtaining the restoration of life for those who have fallen into sin. Strengthening weak and ignorant Christians. Nurturing healthy and strong Christians and encouraging them to progress in the direction of goodness. In light of the above, both Bons-Storm and Bucer emphasize shepherding focused on individual ministry. Pastoral ministry as it is known today should no longer only focus on individual care, considering that the problems faced are not only due to personal factors but also due to structural factors. Why has the understanding of pastoral care in Indonesia become so narrow and limited? According to Susanto, this can be caused by several things, as follows.

First, the understanding of pastoral care in Indonesia was inherited from the West and has not been developed according to the Indonesian context, which is more inward-looking and individualistic. This is in line with the pietistic background of the missionaries who served in Indonesia at that time.

Secondly, the understanding of pastoral care in Indonesia is still based on the image of shepherds and sheep in an agrarian society, as found in several biblical passages, such as Isaiah 40:11, Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34, and John 10. These passages are interpreted in a traditional, narrow and limited way, where the sheep are only understood as believers or church members. This is in line with what John Campbell-Nelson said, that the word "pastoral" gives the image of tranquility, peace, a safe atmosphere: The Good Shepherd leads the sheep in green grass and cool water.

Thirdly, pastoral ministry in Indonesia still follows the theoretical and traditional division of church ministry. Such divisions can be misleading and have an impact on the compartmentalization of the field of service itself. In fact, in practice the ministry cannot be compartmentalized. In such a division of ecclesiastical services, pastoral care becomes a narrow and limited field of service. This ministry is only carried out in verbal form towards individuals and small groups (such as families). Service to society, let alone to the environment, is not considered a field of pastoral service. In fact, in ecclesial ministry, the pastoral dimension should color everything. In practice, ecclesial ministry also cannot be compartmentalized.

In this regard, pastoral direction continues to progress. Susanto further explained that through recent pastoral studies, the narrow and limited understanding of pastoral care has been criticized. Citing the views of Stephen Pattison, who argues that pastoral care directed at individuals basically does not appreciate togetherness and social aspects. Pastoral care cannot be limited to individuals alone but to the world. There are many sins, sufferings, and capacities for growth whose roots are beyond the individual human being. Nor can pastoral care be aimed at Christians alone. In reality, the Church's ministry, including pastoral care, is not done only for the Church, Hommes states explicitly the connection between pastoral theology and pastoral care. According to him, pastoral theology is a theological reflection on and in the context of pastoral ministry and pastoral theology is a multidisciplinary reflection on pastoral needs and the way both churches and individuals should respond to them.

In addition, the problems faced in Indonesia are far more complex than just individual issues. For example, environmental issues that require a pastoral response. Furthermore, Susanto quotes F. Haarsma's view that the limited use of the term *pastorate* for the care of individual souls or small groups cannot be justified if it is based on the biblical symbol of the shepherd. The *pastorate* does not only aim at liberation from sin, guilt, fear and doubt, despair and hatred, but also at liberation from economic, societal, cultural and political power that prevents people from being human. The *pastorate* is focused on the human city and on the people in the city. Another issue that requires a pastoral response is that theology and various local wisdoms can actually play an important role in pastoral response here. The advancement of science and technology is a struggle for pastoral ministry, because whether everything has a positive impact and brings goodness to its users is a separate issue.

J.B. Banawiratma writes in more detail about social pastoral care through 10 transformative pastoral agendas towards empowering the poor with a gender justice, human rights and environmental perspective. The ten agendas are: (1) Open churching through contextually based communities; (2) Dialogue with the poor, with cultures, and with religions; (3) Base the movement on the Gospel of Jesus Christ; (4) Interpretation and action: Empowerment of the poor from the perspective of gender justice, human rights, and the environment; (5) Interpretation and experience of prayer and contemplation; (6) Contextual reflection; (7) Cross-textual and cross-contextual encounters; (8) Interdisciplinary approach; (9) Following the path of Christ's self-sacrificing kenosis; (10) Affirmation and confrontation towards transformation. In the explanation above, it is clear that pastoral theology that is relevant for Indonesia is one that answers the needs of the people. This is also explained by Sutanto, "pastoral theology that is relevant for Indonesia is pastoral theology that can answer the needs of the Church and Indonesian society. In line with Van Beek's explanation, the theology needed in Indonesia and abroad now is an urgent concern for the total experience of suffering of members of society which is reflected through a deep theological approach and aims at need. According to him, God's purpose with human life and human suffering and brokenness in God's created world cannot be separated. Our relief efforts should be linked to God's overarching purpose. Pastoral care cannot be separated from the reality of suffering and crisis under spiritual words and spiritual quotations from the Bible. The issue of divorce in this family remains under the light of the Bible.

As explained above, the current context in Indonesia is that of divorce in the family, even though there are many who struggle with this case. At the time of this writing, the author tried to look at the cases that have occurred to date and it turns out that there are still many cases of divorce that occur and this is not separated from the lives of Christians or non-Christians. However, divorce cases will continue to be a long struggle in the future. Even the reality of the case with its various forms will always be present in an imperfect world, such as what happens between the husband and wife of a loved one.

Lartey summarized the purpose of pastoral theological method as two: First, to gain a deeper understanding of the divine, human nature and the relationship between them. Secondly, the development of more appropriate forms of care for people in context as a reflection of divine nature.

Pastoral Theology Methods Relevant Today

The term "method" is used to indicate a way of doing things. It refers more to the nature of the task to be performed than to the techniques by which it is accomplished. Bernard Lonergan, in his book "Method in Theology", says that "A method is a normative pattern of repeated and related operations, which produce cumulative and progressive results. A set of operations is repeated in a pattern that results in the performance of the task in a precise manner. A method is not a mechanical process or technique for achieving results. A method does not replace the skill and inspiration of the person using the method. But attention to method can help one to carry out the task completely and well. And, in a difficult and complex task different operations can be organized by specialists who need an understanding of how their jobs fit into the overall project.

Not every work of Pastoral Theology has to complement all the operations of the discipline, but every work can be oriented toward the task prescribed by the discipline. Clarification of method can give us a critical perspective on the work that has been done in Pastoral Theology and guide us in carrying out the work that needs to be done.

In our search for a theological pastoral method, we will be guided by three interrelated questions: how is it a pastoral science, how is it a theological science, what is its method. In order to deepen our search, to these questions we will describe the answers given by four contemporary pastoral theologians. These four theologians have given us an outline of their procedures and are representative

of the four main approaches to the science of Pastoral Theology. They are Karl Rahner, Juan Luis Segundo, Martin Thornton, and Seward Hiltner. We will not simply compare their views in a historical or analytical way. Nor will we propose a fresh definition of Pastoral Theology from a theoretical point of view. Rather we will use their views to arrive at a formulation of the Question in order to deepen our search for a theological and pastoral method

All of these authors agree that in one way or another Pastoral Theology reflects on the pastoral work of the Church and the Church's ministers, that Pastoral Theology reflects on the theological tradition used in that work, and on the pastoral situation in which that work is carried out. They all distinguish Pastoral Theology from the study of the theory and practice of ministry, and from the sciences of *dengenalidade*. However, their explanations of pastoral theological method differ.

How does such a pastoral perspective relate reflection on the pastoral situation to reflection on the theological tradition? There are difficulties in the method of correlation by which some of these authors attempt to indicate this relationship. These authors indicate that:

- A. Pastoral theology is to interpret the Word of God in a way that is faithful to both the Gospel and to people,
- B. Pastoral theology is to reinterpret our experiences or reinterpret theological sources,
- C. Pastoral theology creates a "two-way street" for questions and answers between faith and culture.

Following Segundo's proposal, we will propose that the term pastoral hermeneutic is suitable to describe pastoral theological methods that tend to interpret cases and traditions and find the true Word of God for them. But that requires a re-examination of the idea of the "Word of God". Practical Theology can understand the Word of God as the message of salvation that has been revealed in Christ and applied in specific ways to pastoral situations. But a Pastoral Theology that reflects on both cases and traditions from a pastoral perspective of concern and responsibility must find a theological connection, which is based on the study of both cases and scriptures and must go beyond historical and literary studies. A case reveals the theological reality found and pointed out to us in the tradition.

CONCLUSIONS

The author acknowledges that while the Bible prohibits divorce, there are cases—such as irreconcilable conflict or abuse—where separation may be necessary, and pastors play a crucial role in guiding couples through such crises. The paper calls for a more contextually relevant pastoral theology in Indonesia, moving beyond Western frameworks to address local needs, particularly in marital and family issues. It emphasizes a holistic pastoral approach that fosters dialogue, peace, and community support, integrating elements like *koinonia*, *diakonia*, and *marturia*. Future research should explore culturally sensitive pastoral models for marital crisis and divorce in Indonesia, examining religious and cultural attitudes, comparative theological adaptations, post-divorce church care, and ethical reflections through qualitative interviews, biblical analysis, and case studies. This would help develop a pastoral theology that balances biblical principles with Indonesia's unique socio-religious context.

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