



# Postmodernism and the Challenges of a Christian Education Worldview in Higher Education in Indonesia

Juli Santoso

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia  
[julisantoso@indonesiastt.ac.id](mailto:julisantoso@indonesiastt.ac.id)  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8549-0605>

Yusak Tanasyah

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Moriah, Tangerang, Indonesia  
[ytanasyah@gmail.com\\*](mailto:ytanasyah@gmail.com)  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0450-8314>

Sutrisno

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Moriah, Tangerang, Indonesia  
[christdeon@gmail.com](mailto:christdeon@gmail.com)  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3498-5568>

Christiani Hutabarat

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Misi William Carey, Medan, Indonesia  
[pakyudi@gmail.com](mailto:pakyudi@gmail.com)  
<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-3222-8845>

Netti Rismawati

Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Widya Agape, Malang, Indonesia  
[sttwa.malang@gmail.com](mailto:sttwa.malang@gmail.com)  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2408-0298>



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## Abstract

Postmodernism gravely calls into question the feasibility of a modern educational enterprise since postmodern relativism appears to undercut the possibility of justification, both inside and outside of education. As a result, some educators believe that postmodernism is the declared end of education. This article presents a biblical worldview as the unifying theme for the combination of knowledge and religion in higher education. The biblical story has significance for the Christian faith and Christian ethics and serves as a strong basis for a complete worldview to face the challenge of the postmodern world. According to this viewpoint, the biblical story offers solutions to the most important problems in life, such as: Who are we? We are where? What is the issue? What is the remedy? The biblical story offers a strong basis for an all-encompassing worldview that responds to these concerns and aids in resolving any potential separation in our lives were postmodern gives questions in higher education.

**Keywords:** postmodernism, Christian education, worldview, higher education, pluralism.

## Introduction

There is a metaphysical, transcendental awakening in our postmodern environment. Walking into a bookshop, perusing the TV guide, or standing at the checkout counter in any



supermarket reveals that the postmodern period is reaching out to the mystical, psychic, and supernatural. With its pantheistic worldview, the New Age movement has subliminally influenced self-help programs, children's literature, music, and the arts. Crystals that channel cosmic energy are marketed in malls, while blockbuster films investigate witchcraft, spirit guides, the occult, out-of-body experiences, and near-death experiences. Angels, a plethora of them, populate the figurine stands, emerge as the heroes of modern miracles, and appear on best-seller lists. All of these are signs of spiritual awakening.

The obsession with the future characterizes the postmodern age. Astrophysicists, meteorologists, microbiologists, political strategists, and social scientists are all working hard to forecast and, ideally, influence the future. (Jameson, 2013, p. 55) The search for alternative forms of energy, halting the depletion of the ozone layer, discovering the magic bullet for cancer, the key cocktail for AIDS, overcoming the physiological problems of weightlessness in prolonged space travel, and selectively introducing and reproducing desirable genetic traits in future generations of crops, livestock continues through complex computer models, simulations, genetic engineering, biogenetics, think tanks, and symposia. Overall, there is a concentrated endeavor to create a better and brighter tomorrow.

Much postmodernist theory relies on maintaining skepticism towards metanarratives and here the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard's contribution is crucial. He argued in his "*La condition postmoderne*" (published in French in 1979, and in English in 1984), that we now live in an era in which legitimizing "master narratives" is in crisis and decline (Butler, 2022:13). These narratives are contained within or implied by master philosophies, such as Kantianism, Hegelianism, and Marxism, which hold that history is progressive, that knowledge can liberate us, and that all knowledge has a secret unity.

The two main narratives that Lyotard attacks are the progressive emancipation of humanity—from Christian redemption to Marxist Utopia and the triumph of science Lyotard considers that such doctrines have "lost their credibility since the Second World War" (Noorbakhsh & Shooshtarian, 2010) and simplifying to the extreme, I define the postmodern as a distrust of metanarratives. A metanarrative is a unified tale that attempts to explain how the universe works; in other words, a metanarrative is a worldview (Stephen, 2002, p. 18). Lyotard advises us to be suspicious of such sweeping answers. Postmodernists, for example, reject the phrase "God so loved the world" for two reasons: (1) they deny the existence of God, and (2) statements representing the entire universe (metanarratives) are impossible (Noebel, 2016:120).

Because there is no universal Truth (capital "T") for Postmodernists, there are only "truths" (small "t") that are specific to a culture or set of people and restricted to individual perspectives. Written or spoken words may only reflect a certain localized culture or individual point of view. In this context, a well-worn slogan is, "That may be true for you, but not for me." Postmodernists, however, have put themselves in the position of establishing a metanarrative by making the universal declaration that there are no metanarratives. Their explanation for the world is that there are no explanations for the world, only local myths presented by different civilizations. As a result, Postmodernism is known as the anti-Christian worldview (Edgar William, 1995).

The hyper-tech cousins of the postmodernists, the post-human and transhuman theorists who emphasize our march closer to the cyborg (fused human-device entity), upload every other layer of notion which throws a politics of commonality off-balance; though some keep out possibilities for a brand-new cyber politics primarily based totally on our shared evolutionary destiny (Haraway, 1988). However, what postmodernists and post/trans-human theorists — protagonists for a cyborg future—blatantly forget about or deny is that our lives and `selves` are, after all, very a great deal centered: through the capital, as social pressure, and social



relation. As capital is a social pressure that exists as more than a few contradictory social drives and flows via capitalist social relations, and insofar as we emerge as capital, then our ordinary lives are lived via and explicitly those contradictions (Chambers, 2000). Our lives are fragmented, shattered, and unbalanced—and postmodernism displays this, though simplest at the extent of `discourse` and the `text`—however this moves a chord simplest due to the fact the `human` has historically emerged as capital, human capital.

The most popular 'common sense' rejection of class is that it is an outmoded, obsolete concept that is no longer relevant in a (postmodern) society that has become 'classless.' (Hill, 1999). The growth of intellectual, human, and social capital and the increasing importance of all a form of self-capitalization combined with an emphasis on the Lyotardian logic of performance epistemology of performance, providing a role for government in developing learning infrastructure, incentives, and promotion of access to knowledge in education. Postmodern criticism is in affinity with structuralism as a critique of the decentralization of humanitarian and liberal philosophies and rationality, it is autonomous, self-transparent, and subject to humanistic thinking. This leads to a general theoretical understanding of language and culture in terms of systems of language and symbols. In addition to criticism, Postmodernism is not only structuralism, contemporary thinking about education – whether pedagogy, curriculum, or leadership (Peters, Tesar, & Jackson, 2018).

The intellectual struggle going on the higher education and scholarly journals and professional societies. Enlightenment naturalism and postmodern antirealism are arrayed in an unholy alliance against a broadly theistic and specifically Christian worldview (Moreland & Craig, 2003:1). An important contemporary ideology – postmodernism – rejects the existence of truth (Moreland & Craig, 2003:131). Postmodernism is both a historical, chronological notion and a philosophical ideology. Understood historically, postmodernism refers to a period of thought that follows and is a reaction to the period called modernity. Modernity is the period of European thought that developed out of the Renaissance (14<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> centuries) and flourished in the Enlightenment (17<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> centuries) in the ideas of people like Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Leibniz, and Kant. In the chronological sense, postmodernism is sometimes called "postmodernism." So understood, it is fair to say that postmodernism is often guilty of a simplistic characterization of modernity, because the thinkers in that period were far from monolithic. Indeed, Descartes, Hume, and Kant have elements in their thought that are more at home in postmodernism than they are in the so-called modern era. Nevertheless, setting historical accuracy aside, the chronological notion of postmodernism depicts it as an era that began and, in some sense, re-replaces modernity (Gronum, 2018).

As a philosophical point, postmodernism is primarily a reinterpretation of what knowledge is and what counts as knowledge. More broadly, it represents a form of cultural relativism about such things as reality, truth, reason, value, linguistic meaning, the self, and other notions. Some of the criteria of postmodern JP Moreland & William Lane Craig mention are (Moreland & Craig, 2003):

1. Postmodernists reject the correspondence theory of truth.
2. Postmodernists reject the idea that there are universal, transcultural standards, such as the laws of logic or principles of inductive inference, for determining whether true or false.
3. Postmodernists reject foundationalism as a theory of epistemic justification.
4. Postmodernists deny the existence of universals.
5. Postmodernists also reject essentialism.
6. Postmodernists, such as literary text, do not have an authoritative meaning.
7. Postmodernists, there are no metanarratives.

There is a propensity in higher education in Indonesia to minimize religious behaviors and activities that are associated with Christianity. Christian higher education is directly impacted by the gaps in a more complete grasp of the Christian religion (Pangumbahas & Wlnanto,



2021). For instance, it is assumed that learning and faith should be kept apart in the larger realm of higher education since they represent various fields of study and activity. The social and religious segregation mentioned above harms many people's Christian faiths and, as a result, Christian higher education. Spiritual segregation may reduce the Christian religion to only being involved in the church with little impact on society or public dialogue (Esqueda, 2014): The separation between both the sacred faith and the secular profession, as well as the separation between private faith and public study, results from a segmented existence of the postmodern. Therefore, certain academic staff members and administrators at Christian universities may be able to pursue their careers without making any distinctions from those working at secular universities. To overcome religious compartmentalization, this research defines a biblical worldview as the underlying principle Christian worldview for the fusion of religion and studying higher education facing the postmodern notion.

This article offers a novel perspective on how Christian education in Indonesia navigates the challenges posed by postmodernism within higher education. The purpose of this article is to analyze Indonesia's educational system in higher education, a Christian education worldview, and postmodernism educational philosophy.

## Methods

This method used was a literature review with a qualitative approach (Chong, Lin, & Chen, 2022; Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Mahrool, 2020). This strategy might be specialized, like looking at the impact of the relationship between particular factors, or it can be more general, like looking at the body of evidence in a certain field of study. Additionally, literature reviews are first, identify relevant literature. Thus, we begin by identifying scholarly articles, books, and other relevant sources that discuss Indonesia's higher education system, Christian education, and postmodernism in education. We looked for works that delve into their interconnections or impact on each other. Second, Thematic analysis was conducted by grouping the literature based on common themes or concepts. For instance, themes like "postmodernism in Indonesian higher education," "Christian education in a pluralistic society," or "challenges and opportunities at the intersection." This assisted the researchers in organizing the review. Third, critical evaluation was undertaken by analyzing the literature critically. We assessed the strengths and weaknesses of each work, how they contribute to the understanding of the subject, and the perspectives they offer regarding the relationship between Christian education, postmodernism, and Indonesia's higher education. Fourth, we identified gaps and trends. Then we determined further gaps in the existing literature. We looked for areas where more research is needed and also, recognized any emerging trends or common threads across the literature that might shape the discourse in the field. Fifth, we then synthesized and interpreted the findings from the reviewed literature. We then offered our interpretations and insights into how postmodernism influences Christian education in the Indonesian higher education context and discussed the challenges faced, potential strategies for adaptation, and the implications for educators and policymakers alike.

## Postmodern Challenges in Higher Education

Postmodernism maintains that all moral rules and normative frameworks are historical constructions (Browne, 2010). This implies that in the heat of a postmodern society, the old concept that there are moral absolutes to which we all have access and to which we are all, in theory, the subject has disappeared. As a result, we experience seasickness as we are thrown around by wave after wave (Walsh, 2012). The postmodern perspective of reality, as well as the nature and source of knowledge, is opposed to the Judeo-Christian worldview and undermines the foundation of intellectual existence (Little, 1997). The concept of a unified field of knowledge arose organically from the belief that men possessed an objective word from God, who functioned as the center and circumference of all existence as Creator. However,

the college curriculum gradually drifted away from the concept of a unified body of knowledge, paving the path for academic fragmentation. Higher education served as a prelude to an incentive for the remainder of culture's final path: fragmentation (Little, 1997).

The postmodern mind's fragmentation stems from the conviction in the impossibility of both the existence and necessity of a unified body of knowledge. Ontologically, nothing exists outside the person, and the individual possesses nothing beyond the enjoyment of the moment. There is no overarching purpose, no cohesive worldview educating man on how to behave according to an objective, universal principle greater than himself for the postmodern mentality. Without the epistemic structure of a worldview tying the particulars to the universal, each moment is free to be lived in the expediency of its possibilities (s) (Little, 1997).

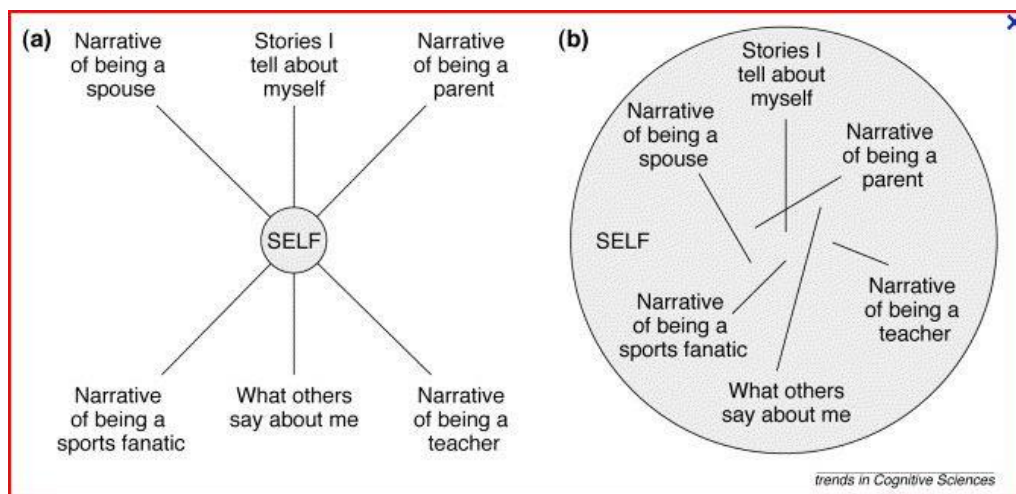


Figure 1: Christian Education (a) Vs Postmodern Education (b), (Gallagher, 2000)

Today, many students who have received a Christian education think in a fragmented way thinking of a culture that professes that God is the Creator but denies God as the Creator. Most people prove complete ignorance of the terminology uniform knowledge. Thus, they work on their respective subjects in isolation, unaware that they are studying under the concept of a Christian worldview. For example, when a student attends a literature class, he thinks only of the one play he is studying and only thinks of things related to that class. To overcome this, trainers must present a Christian worldview, teach interactively, and extract all information from all. A legitimate category of the study of theological beliefs (Pangumbahas & Winanto, 2021). Literature, history, philosophy, sociology, and other fields must be taught in theological departments' interpretation matrix. All too often, each discipline is almost completely understood within its circle, resulting in a fragmented approach to education. This only increases the fragmentation that students face in introduction to the academy.

Noebel mentions that postmodernists, while more nuanced in some respects than their fellow atheists, have their theological foundations in atheism. "Postmodernists agree with Nietzsche that 'God'—that is, the ultimate being of classical theism—has become unreal, as have the autonomous self and the meaning of history," writes Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Vanhoozer, 2005:12). The Postmodern idea that religious beliefs are private preferences has filtered down from the academy to the "unenlightened" commoner, many of whom now embrace pluralism. Religious pluralism is the belief that one must be tolerant of all religious beliefs because no one religion can be true (Noebel, 2016:81).

In answer to theological pluralism, we argue that the problem with this system is the same as the problem with Postmodernism in general: neither our viewpoints nor our choices can





determine reality. Postmodernism will rule the day in humanities and social studies classes, while Modernism will still be prominent in science, engineering, and mathematics courses for today's college students (Wheatley, 2021). In addition, the Postmodern approach to knowing and reality is not widely accepted in American philosophy schools. Few Christian theologians share the Postmodern view that truth is community oriented (Noebel, 2016:119).

There is no actual reality to which truth can relate, according to the postmodernist anti-realism worldview. Our words, on the other hand, merely correspond to other words and, in the end, build our view of reality. If words just indicate other words, then they can never be utilized to seek Truth. According to Paul Kurtz in *Humanist Manifesto*, Postmodernism "a philosophical-literary movement" is nihilistic (the view that nothing can be known or communicated). Kurtz contends that science provides "reasonably objective rules for appraising its truth claims," in contrast to the view that objective truth is unknown. "Science has become a global language, communicating to all men and women regardless of their cultural backgrounds," he argues (Noebel, 2016:124).

There are a few key challenges Christian education might face in Indonesian higher education within a postmodern context, such as: First, relativism and truth. Postmodernism challenges the concept of absolute truth. Christian education often upholds specific truths based on biblical principles. Balancing these differing perspectives on truth can be challenging, especially in a pluralistic society like Indonesia. Second, pluralism and tolerance. Indonesia is known for its religious diversity and tolerance. Christian education might need to adapt its worldview to coexist and engage with other belief systems respectfully without compromising its core tenets. Third, critical thinking and faith. Postmodernism encourages critical thinking, which is valuable in academia. However, encouraging critical thinking might inadvertently challenge certain aspects of faith-based education if not navigated carefully. Fourth, cultural context. Indonesian culture is deeply embedded in the educational system. Integrating Christian values within this context while respecting cultural nuances poses a significant challenge.

The problem of postmodernity places the Christian community in general, and Christian education, in the position of teaching people how to establish a Christian worldview and then understand all of life from that viewpoint. This will require Christian educators to develop and teach curricula that challenge the Christian mind to (1) think integrative and coherently with all pieces of information, (2) think in terms of the larger and weighty questions of life considering theology, (3) understand the epistemological uniqueness and importance of revelation, (4) be assumption sensitive, and (5) think through the ontological and epistemological implications and philosophical extension (Little, 1997).

### **Christian Education in Higher Education**

Christian educators need a new sense of hope. In today's world of turmoil, parents need encouragement to raise their children. Sophistication in technology and innovation in programming may be so, but these advances have not produced the breakthrough that brings spiritual maturity to basic Christian education. Students inhabit this narrative, developing the values of the Kingdom and taking on the persona of Christ. Students take on Christ's persona and embodied values of the Kingdom of God in this narrative. This idea proposes an educational strategy in which students are motivated to model the virtues and teachings of Jesus Christ in their relationships and day-to-day activities. Fostering empathy, compassion, forgiveness, selflessness, and love for others could be part of this. Furthermore, this normativity is not imposed from elsewhere; rather, it is inherent in life and vital to our creatureliness.



The formation of such an ethic is central to the teaching ministry of Christian education. To abandon young people in a sea of moral insecurity would be the height of educational irresponsibility and would contradict a school's purpose. If biblical morality is ultimately anchored in the redemption tale of the Scriptures, then postmodern skepticism of all such great narratives simply exacerbates our cultural and educational predicament (Lyotard, 1984; Walsh, 2012). Elihami quotes Jurgen Habermas that whether it is possible to locate religious education as one of the emancipatory disciplines within the critical social sciences, one whose goal is human freedom. Nicolaidis (2014) argues that civilization is now more than ever blasted with rapid innovation and technological development which threatens to dislodge religious and moral traditions. Nonetheless, religious education has the power either to support or decrease the ideal society of diversity; it depends on how it is constructed, formulated, and delivered (Elihami, 2016; Nicolaidis, 2014).

Christian education in higher education should see the biblical worldview as only one single reality in which God is the God of all creation. Christian education based on the biblical worldview begins with God creating everything in the universe. The Fall came to the earth through the sins of man. Christ came to redeem and return all things to the system that God had created at the beginning. This explains that man is an aspect of God's creation and explains how His world works. Man was placed on earth to manage, and work on His creation (Tanasyah & Putrawan, 2022a; Tandana, Yowa, & Manik 2022). Ryken believes that the Christian Education worldview is not only a notion; it is based on the existence and nature of the triune God. In general, our lives and the fusion of religion and study in Christian higher education are unified by the Creator God (Ryken, 2013). Regardless of the academic subject, Christian educators must include biblical worldview ideas into it to answer the postmodernism worldview. Jesus Christ is the supreme authority in all fields, including physics, history, political science, the humanities, business, and law. All disciplines are His if all truth is God's truth (Esqueda, 2014).

Christian students must grasp that "Truth" exists in the Christian worldview. Almost every aspect of Christianity is worldwide in scope and applicability. God created everything, including men and women. Sin is a universal affliction that affects all humans. God adored the entire planet, including every human being. Christ died for the sins of the entire world, not just for only one or two communities. Christians are to be taught to love God with all their hearts and minds, as well as their fellow humans all around the world. Most significantly, God picked words from the Scriptures and the 'language of the skies' to tell the Truth about Himself and His universe (Psalm 19).

Two crucial collaborations that stem from a biblical worldview should be encouraged by educational leaders and researchers in Christian higher education to face postmodernism (Gulo & Sugiri, 2020). To properly connect with the complexity of God's creation, interdisciplinary instruction and study are crucial. This multidisciplinary interaction will help instructors and students see the world more holistically and with a sense of gratitude for its creator. Faculty members will be able to identify whether components of their Christian religion are purely cultural rather than conforming to a Christian worldview with the aid of more purposeful engagement with other Christian institutions throughout the world or influence the postmodernism perspective. These kinds of interactions help cultural patterns to form and encourage people to question their presumptions and ideas (Holmes, 1987:75).

### **Postmodern and Opportunities of Christian Higher Education in Indonesia**

The intersection of postmodernism and Christian education in the context of higher education in Indonesia presents several intriguing challenges and opportunities. Postmodernism, with its emphasis on skepticism towards metanarratives and the idea that truth is relative, and it challenges the traditional Christian worldview rooted in absolute truth and moral values. In the



Indonesian higher education landscape, where there's a diverse cultural and religious context, navigating this intersection can be somewhat complex.

However, within these challenges lie opportunities, such as: First, Dialogue and Understanding. Postmodernism encourages dialogue and understanding among diverse perspectives. Christian education can leverage this to engage in meaningful conversations and bridge gaps between different worldviews thus promoting global stability. Second, Adaptation and Relevance. Adapting Christian education to the postmodern context can make it more relevant and relatable to students, potentially increasing its appeal and impact. Third, Critical Engagement. Encouraging critical thinking within a Christian framework can strengthen faith by engaging students in deeper discussions about the foundations of their beliefs. Fourth, Ethical Engagement. Postmodernism's emphasis on ethics and social justice aligns with many Christian principles. This alignment can be an avenue for collaboration and shared values between all faiths.

Successfully addressing these challenges requires a balanced approach. Christian educational institutions may need to adapt their pedagogy, curriculum, and approaches to engage with postmodern thought while maintaining the integrity of their faith-based worldview. Emphasizing critical thinking, open dialogue, and ethical engagement can help navigate this complex terrain within Indonesian higher education.

Indonesia lies on a middle ground between secular and Islamic states. Instead of secular nationalism or Islam, the founders of Indonesia chose *Pancasila* as the foundation of their nation. The five ideals of *Pancasila*—spirituality, humanity, unity in diversity, democracy, and social justice—reflect the compromise reached between those who fight for both a secular national government and an Islamic one. The 1945 Constitution's Article 29 on religion likewise reflects the compromise. The following is stated in the Article's Sections 1 and 2: Despite not identifying as an Islamic or religious state, Indonesian culture is well known for being religious and multicultural (Chia, 2022; Elihami, 2016; Kurniawan & Putrawan, 2023). It is very difficult for the government to be concerned with religious education. Scholars also recognized the objective of education in the nation-state is the creation of good and responsible citizens (Hoon, 2013).

The government's choice to implement the proper religious curriculum, particularly in formal schools, is influenced by Indonesia's religious pluralism. In specific terms, it must provide religious significance to students who practice a specific religion while avoiding interfering with students who practice other religions. This situation may appear reasonable, but it could not be as successful for Indonesian religious education. In Indonesia, education is based on a modern philosophical paradigm that believes that the importance of subjects should be emphasized in all fields. The subject matter is seen as having absolute truth and should have been taught to students long ago. Education policy is now based on this philosophy (Septiwiharti, 2010).

A center for the creation and dissemination of knowledge is indeed what a higher education institution is all about. Because of this, the institutions have undoubtedly contributed to the transfer of information and competencies from one era to the next. Academics experiment with new information in a vibrant social setting (Tanasyah & Putrawan, 2022b). Naturally, the necessity for superior performance is always increasing to stay up with the demands of advancement. In the meantime, society discovers that modernism has failed to serve as a means of achieving human welfare and well-being, especially around social life. Instead, because technology shares some traits with individualism, materialism, and liberalism, it has brought about several additional issues, including ecological damage brought on by overuse, expanding social and economic gaps, and a diminished sense of humanity (Tanudirjo, 2017).





Here in Indonesia, we face the challenge of postmodernism in higher education with questions from faculty and students. What option will our students select if given the option to choose between wealth and wisdom? How will our students respond if we ask them what their life's purpose is? Success or living a life that pleases God? From whom did they learn to identify their values and goals in life? While the world community continues to inundate our children with a wide range of competing ideologies, values, and lifestyles that are increasingly hostile to God, the critical question for us, ministers, and Christian educators are whether we recognize and see the threats coming to abuse the life of our students. When we as educators allow our kids to construct their lives on a foundation built on sand, we put their future safety in at risk (Santoso, 2013).

## Conclusion

This research was concerned with the Christian education worldview. Specifically, in today's world, the challenge of postmodernism in higher education is more real and strong not only from the books but through the faculty itself. As we in Indonesia have freedom of religion based on the Constitution, our higher education should be aware and wake up to the challenge of postmodernism for educational institutions. Education Christian worldview is understood, how it was embedded into classroom practice, the barriers presented when teaching from a Christian worldview, and how higher education could better support the institution and Christian faculty in their integration of faith and learning without losing their faith and science.

Christian higher education should move away from the passivity of the Christian worldview into actively implementing a Christian Worldview education to create a new generation of young Christian adults who are empowered and actively facing the challenge of postmodernism. A Christian education worldview should direct the lives of students and offer a compelling perspective to Christian higher education endeavors and aspirations instead of taking a postmodernism worldview in their life. Christian education must be based on a biblical worldview for Christian higher education institutions to be true to their objective of fusing academic and extracurricular learning with the Christian Worldview. Since there can be no Christian education without a Christian faculty, recruiting criteria should also include the expectation that faculty members will be dedicated to thinking and living for Christ. What we need is not Christians who are also academics but Christian scholars, not Christianity alongside education but a Christian education worldview, in order to meet the real challenges higher education faces with the rise of postmodernism.

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