

Providentia Dei amid polycrisis: Divine providence and digital church resilience

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Abstract: The contemporary world is entangled in a global polycrisis in which pandemic, climate crisis, geopolitical conflict, and economic disruption reinforce one another, while church communities increasingly inhabit digital spaces. This article reconstructs the doctrine of divine providence (*providentia Dei*) as a doctrinal foundation for the resilience of digital church communities. Employing qualitative library research with a constructive systematic-theological approach, the study analyzes the classical grammar of providence—*conservatio*, *concursus*, and *gubernatio*—in dialogue with Calvin, Berkhof, Berkouwer, Barth, Webster, and Fergusson, then reconstructs it christologically, eschatologically, and pneumatologically. The findings demonstrate that providence, once liberated from speculative determinism and ideological misuse, functions as a practical grammar of faith: *conservatio* grounds congregational identity against algorithmic commodification, *concursus* mobilizes congregational participation through digital ministry, and *gubernatio* sustains hope amid global uncertainty. Its distinctive contribution lies in identifying the Holy Spirit, the second hand of God who pervades all creation, as the mode of providential presence within cyberspace, a doctrinal foundation largely absent from the predominantly practical studies of the digital church in Indonesia.

Keywords: digital church, ecclesial resilience, polycrisis, *providentia Dei*, pneumatology, systematic theology

Introduction

In the third decade of the twenty-first century, the world no longer confronts crises that stand on their own but an interlacing of crises that reinforce one another. The COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis, geopolitical conflict, supply-chain disruption, and global inflationary pressure are bound together in complex causal relations, and scholars have accordingly named this situation a polycrisis: the causal entanglement of multiple crises within global systems, generating a combined impact greater than the sum of the individual crises.¹ Within such a framework, crises do not arrive in sequence but simultaneously, each aggravating the others and placing societies—church communities among them—in protracted uncertainty. This condition is not merely a matter of risk management; it is a matter of faith: where is God, and how does he govern a world that appears to be coming apart?

¹ Michael Lawrence et al., “Global Polycrisis: The Causal Mechanisms of Crisis Entanglement,” *Global Sustainability* 7 (2024): e6, <https://doi.org/10.1017/sus.2024.1>.

At the same time, social life has undergone a structural transformation into a network society, in which digital networks constitute a new social morphology and network logic reshapes production, experience, power, and culture.² The church is not immune to this transformation. The pandemic accelerated a large-scale migration of ecclesial life into digital space, giving rise to what Heidi Campbell and her colleagues describe as the problem of digital ecclesiology: how the church is understood, inhabited, and renegotiated once fellowship is mediated by technology.³ Online worship, virtual fellowship, and platform-based ministry have become a permanent feature of the post-pandemic ecclesial landscape rather than a temporary emergency measure.

Churches in Indonesia have experienced this shift with particular intensity. Indonesian theological scholarship has sought to construct a theology for the digital church, among other ways, through biblical reflection on the validity of online worship during the pandemic.⁴ Yet beneath the debate over whether online worship is valid lies a more fundamental and rarely examined question: the doctrine of God himself. When congregants face layoffs, household economic vulnerability, ecological anxiety, and a flood of digital disinformation all at once, the question that unsettles faith is not first of all about the medium of worship but about divine providence: does God truly preserve, accompany, and govern the world amid polycrisis?

The doctrine of divine providence (*providentia Dei*) is in fact among the most intimate loci of systematic theology and, at the same time, among the most susceptible to abuse. The history of its reception shows that providence can degenerate into a paralyzing fatalism or, worse, into ideological legitimation for an oppressive order, as occurred when providence was enlisted to support the theological construction of apartheid in South Africa.⁵ Conversely, neglect of the doctrine leaves congregations without a grammar of faith by which to read the experience of crisis. David Fergusson observes that providence suffered a serious decline in modern theology precisely when the world most needed an articulation of God's accompanying presence, and that a more polyphonic and honest approach to the complexity of the biblical witness is therefore required. By polyphonic, Fergusson means the recognition that Scripture does not sound a single note about the manner in which God preserves the world: alongside the note of confidence in constant preservation, there sound notes of lament, protest, and unanswered questions, so that the doctrine must be formulated as a chorus capable of holding that tension rather than as a solo that flattens it.⁶

This article accepts Fergusson's methodological premise, epistemic humility and the refusal of any single explanation for every event, but moves beyond it at two points. First, Fergusson's polyphony largely remains a hermeneutical disposition toward the text, whereas the present study extends it into an ecclesial disposition: congregations living amid polycrisis need not only an honest way of reading but also a grammar for enduring. Second, a chorus

² Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 500–502.

³ Heidi A. Campbell, ed., *Digital Ecclesiology: A Global Conversation* (College Station: Digital Religion Publications, 2020), 3–5.

⁴ Susanto Dwiraharjo, "Konstruksi Teologis Gereja Digital: Sebuah Refleksi Biblis Ibadah Online di Masa Pandemi Covid-19," *EPIGRAPHE: Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan Kristiani* 4, no. 1 (2020): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.33991/epigraphe.v4i1.145>.

⁵ Manitza Kotzé, "The Doctrine of Providence in South African Theologies: Historical Formation," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 46, no. 1 (2025): a3610, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v46i1.3610>.

⁶ David Fergusson, *The Providence of God: A Polyphonic Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1–3.

still requires a key; without a firm christological and pneumatological center, polyphony easily degenerates into cacophony, leaving congregations with no footing before suffering. Fergusson's critique of the decline of providence is therefore read here not as a terminus but as a point of entry for formulating a more specific research gap.

This is where this study's research gap lies. First, literature on the digital church in Indonesia remains predominantly practical and missiological, focused on ministry strategy, media, and leadership, and has not yet worked systematically on doctrinal foundations. Second, contemporary studies of providence generally operate in historical and philosophical registers without connecting the doctrine to digital ecclesial reality. Third, the discourse on the resilience of faith communities has been approached largely from psychology and pastoral studies and therefore lacks a firm dogmatic foundation in the doctrine of God. No study has yet explicitly reconstructed *providentia Dei* as a foundation for the resilience of digital church communities in the context of global polycrisis; this article seeks to fill that gap.

From that gap, the article advances its thesis: *providentia Dei*, when reconstructed christologically, eschatologically, and pneumatologically, is not a theorem explaining why crises occur but a grammar of faith that forms the resilience of digital church communities—and the novelty this study offers lies in identifying the Holy Spirit as the mode of God's providential presence pervading cyberspace, so that digital space does not stand beyond the reach of divine care but becomes one of its fields. Formulated in this way, the thesis is at the same time an invitation to read the polycrisis now unfolding not as evidence of God's absence but as the very terrain in which his providence demands to be articulated anew—including in the cyberspace that has become a second dwelling place for most congregants today.

This article aims to reconstruct the doctrine of providence as a theological foundation for the resilience of church communities living in the digital age and amid global, social, and economic polycrisis. To that end, it employs qualitative library research with a constructive systematic-theological approach. The analysis proceeds in three stages: descriptive, mapping the context of polycrisis and digital disruption; analytical, examining the classical grammar of providence (*conservatio, concursus, gubernatio*) in the Reformed tradition and its development in modern theology; and constructive, reformulating the doctrine christologically, eschatologically, and pneumatologically within the context of the digital church. The formal object of the study is the doctrine of providence as a locus of systematic theology, in line with Webster's insistence that providence must be worked out from within Trinitarian dogmatics rather than from a general theory of world history.⁷

The discussion unfolds in four parts. The first maps global polycrisis and digital disruption as the context of contemporary theology. The second traces the classical grammar of *providentia Dei* in the systematic-theological tradition together with its points of vulnerability. The third reconstructs providence as participatory, Christological, and hope-filled. The fourth applies the results of that reconstruction as a foundation for the resilience of digital church communities, with particular attention to the Indonesian context. The article concludes by summarizing its theoretical contribution to systematic theology and the life of the church.

⁷ John Webster, "Providence," in *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 203–226.

Global polycrisis and digital disruption as the context of theological reflection

The concept of polycrisis gains analytical precision through the work of Michael Lawrence and colleagues, who define it as the causal entanglement of crises across multiple global systems that significantly degrades humanity's prospects for well-being. They identify three causal pathways that link crises: common stresses, domino effects, and inter-systemic feedbacks. A global crisis emerges when a fast-moving trigger event converges with slow-moving structural stresses, pushing systems out of equilibrium.⁸ For theology, this framework matters because it refuses any isolated reading of crisis: a congregation's economic crisis is not separable from ecological and geopolitical crises but is interwoven with them.

The economic dimension of polycrisis intersects directly with digital life. Shoshana Zuboff shows that the contemporary digital economy operates according to the logic of surveillance capitalism, which claims human experience as free raw material to be translated into behavioral data and traded as prediction products.⁹ This extractive logic means that the digital space congregations inhabit is not neutral; it is an economic space engineered to harvest attention and to shape behavior. The resilience of church communities in the digital age therefore cannot be reduced to technical competence in media, for what is at stake is an anthropology and an economy that compete with the vision of the human person and of community held out by the kingdom of God.

Meanwhile, the social structure within which the church lives has changed fundamentally. Castells maintains that networks constitute the new social morphology of societies and that the diffusion of network logic substantially modifies the operation and the outcomes of processes of production, experience, power, and culture.¹⁰ In a network society, presence is no longer purely territorial; relationships are built across physical space through flows of information. For ecclesiology, this means the classical question of the gathered church (*ecclesia*) gains a new layer: how is fellowship lived out when togetherness is mediated by networks, and how is congregational identity sustained when members are simultaneously nodes in other digital networks that claim their loyalty and attention?

Developments in digital theological research display an important paradigm shift. Daekyung Jung distinguishes between the "online church" as an extension of broadcasting physical worship and "church-online" as a mode of ecclesial existence that genuinely inhabits digital space with its own theological integrity.¹¹ This shift calls for doctrinal work, not merely technical innovation. If the online church is church in the proper sense, then the whole range of ecclesiological *loci*, the marks of the church, the sacraments, ministry, and discipline, must be rethought, and at a deeper level still, the doctrine of God that undergirds ecclesiology must be articulated within a digital context.

Empirical data from the Indonesian context reveal the complexity of congregational experience in digital space. A study by Binsar Pakpahan and colleagues of 421 members of the Huria Kristen Batak Protestan in Jakarta found that a majority of respondents (62.7 percent)

⁸ Lawrence et al., "Global Polycrisis," e6.

⁹ Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2019), 8–10.

¹⁰ Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 500.

¹¹ Daekyung Jung, "Church in the Digital Age: From Online Church to Church-Online," *Theology and Science* 21, no. 4 (2023): 781–805, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746700.2023.2255956>.

chose to return to in-person worship, with an experiential gap of 60 to 90 percent between digital and in-person worship, particularly with respect to the need for communal fellowship.¹² The finding underscores that digital migration does not automatically yield equivalent fellowship; screens cannot satisfy an incarnational longing. Yet the same finding also shows that a portion of the congregation continues to choose digital space and to be helped by it, so that the way forward is not a romanticization of the past but a mature hybrid ecclesiology.

Within Indonesian scholarship, cybertheology has been proposed as a theological contribution addressing spirituality in the online world. Sopacoly and Lattu show that cyberspace has become a real arena for the lived appropriation of faith among Indonesian Christians, demanding a theological framework that can read divine presence within digital mediality rather than ignore it.¹³ Such a contribution is valuable, yet it remains largely at a phenomenological and methodological level. The dogmatic question, what doctrine of God undergirds a resilient digital spirituality?, still awaits sustained treatment, and it is precisely here that the doctrine of providence offers itself.

The need for a doctrinal foundation is felt still more acutely at the level of leadership. Daniel Ronda cautions that an era of technological disruption requires Christian leaders not only to adapt technically but also to be theologically rooted, since disruption unsettles basic assumptions about authority, community, and truth.¹⁴ Without doctrinal grounding, the church's response to disruption tends to swing between two extremes: a defensive rejection of technology or an uncritical surrender to the logic of the digital market. Both alike fail to generate resilience, for genuine resilience is born of conviction about who God is and how he works in the world.

Yahya Afandi has pioneered this awareness within Indonesian systematic theology by insisting that the church cannot evade the influence of information technology and must formulate its digital ecclesiology theologically rather than pragmatically.¹⁵ The present article moves a step further, from ecclesiology to theology proper: before asking whether the digital church is church, one must ask what kind of God is believed to preserve the church, digital and physical alike, amid polycrisis. That question leads to the classical grammar of *providentia Dei*, traced in the section that follows.

The classical grammar of Providentia Dei in the systematic-theological tradition

The Christian tradition understands providence as God's continuing work upon his creation, customarily formulated in three moments: preservation (*conservatio*), concurrence (*concursus*), and governance (*gubernatio*). Calvin laid the foundation of this understanding by rejecting any

¹² Binsar J. Pakpahan, Puji H. Aritonang, and Agus Hendratmo, "Congregation Members' Response to Worship and Fellowship in the Digital Space during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 80, no. 1 (2024): a9980, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v80i1.9980>.

¹³ Mick Mordekhai Sopacoly and Izak Y. M. Lattu, "Kekristenan dan Spiritualitas Online: Cybertheology sebagai Sumbangsih Berteologi di Indonesia," *Gema Teologika: Jurnal Teologi Kontekstual dan Filsafat Keilahian* 5, no. 2 (2020): 137–151.

¹⁴ Daniel Ronda, "Kepemimpinan Kristen di Era Disrupsi Teknologi," *Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat* 3, no. 1 (2019): 1–8.

¹⁵ Yahya Afandi, "Gereja dan Pengaruh Teknologi Informasi 'Digital Ecclesiology'," *FIDEI: Jurnal Teologi Sistematis dan Praktika* 1, no. 2 (2018): 270–283, <https://doi.org/10.34081/fidei.v1i2.12>.

picture of God as a momentary creator who completed his work once and for all; true faith regards God as the continual sustainer and governor of the world, upholding, preserving, and moving everything he has made.¹⁶ For Calvin the world is not a machine abandoned by its maker; at every instant its existence depends on the will of the living God.

Calvin often forgets the pastoral character of this doctrine. Providence for him is not a speculative theorem for explaining every event but a teaching of consolation: the knowledge that all things rest in the Father's hands frees believers from paralyzing anxiety and from excessive dread of the future.¹⁷ In this light, providence was from the outset intended as a grammar of resilience rather than an instrument of divination. Failure to distinguish the two breeds two equally destructive pathologies: a fatalism that capitulates to circumstance, and a triumphalism that claims to read God's plan in every event for its own advantage.

The Reformed tradition's systematization of the doctrine is evident in Louis Berkhof, who formulates providence in these three elements while locating it between two deviations: a deism that separates God from the world and a pantheism that dissolves God into it.¹⁸ Berkhof's formulation serves as a useful map: *conservatio* affirms that God upholds the existence of all things; *concursus* affirms that God works in and through secondary causes, including human action, without negating human responsibility; *gubernatio* affirms that God directs all things toward his purpose. Together the three constitute a grammar that enables faith to read the world without naivety and without despair.

G. C. Berkouwer supplies a crucial epistemological correction: providence can be known only in faith in the God who reveals himself in Jesus Christ, not inferred from neutral observation of the course of history.¹⁹ This correction closes the door on a speculative providentialism fond of interpreting disaster as God's punishment of others or success as a sign of divine favor. Amid the flood of digital disinformation, when assorted conspiratorial narratives compete to explain polycrisis through theological claims, Berkouwer's insistence functions as a hermeneutical fence: congregations are not called to read the secrets of God's governance off events but to trust the God they have come to know in Christ.

Karl Barth carries that correction to its climax by placing providence firmly within the article of faith: confidence in God's preservation is not a philosophy of history or a worldview (*Weltanschauung*) available to anyone, but a confession born of God's covenant of grace with his creation.²⁰ With this move, Barth severs the root of providence's abuse as legitimation for any political order whatsoever, a concern born of watching a theology of providence fitted out as a garment for German nationalism. Providence must never become the ideology of history's victors; it is a child's confession of trust in the Father.

On that basis Barth reinterprets the three classical moments of providence christologically. Divine preservation (*conservatio*) means that God preserves his creation for the sake of the covenant fulfilled in Christ; divine concurrence means that God precedes, accompanies, and follows the action of the creature without abolishing its freedom; and divine governance

¹⁶ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), I.xvi.1.

¹⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.xvii.11.

¹⁸ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), 165–167.

¹⁹ G. C. Berkouwer, *The Providence of God*, trans. Lewis B. Smedes (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 50–52.

²⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/3, trans. G. W. Bromiley and R. J. Ehrlich (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1960), 3–5.

means that all things are directed toward the end disclosed in him.²¹ Providence is thus not a blind and anonymous power but the face of the Father known in the Son. Precisely for that reason the doctrine can sustain resilience: what is trusted is not a guarantee of exemption from suffering but the faithfulness of a Person who has proved his solidarity.

Contemporary theology both notes and laments this doctrine's erosion. John Webster shows that in modernity providence suffered a twofold attrition: from without by a naturalism that closes the world to divine action, and from within by a theology that treated it as a general theory of world history detached from the doctrine of the Trinity.²² Its recovery demands that providence be relocated within the whole economy of salvation of the triune God. Webster's diagnosis is pertinent to the digital church: without Trinitarian grounding, talk of God's accompanying presence in digital space readily degenerates into technological optimism or into a diffuse spirituality incapable of bearing the weight of real crisis.

Two recent voices complete this map. Fergusson offers a polyphonic approach that acknowledges the non-singularity of the biblical witness to providence—there is a note of constant preservation, and notes of struggle and protest—so the doctrine must be formulated with epistemic humility, making room for lament and mystery.²³ Kotzé, meanwhile, through a study of the doctrine's reception history in South Africa, shows how providence was once twisted into a buttress for racial ideology, and that every reconstruction must therefore incorporate critical safeguards against ideological abuse.²⁴ From this survey, the constructive task becomes clear: to formulate a providence that is Christological and Trinitarian, honest about suffering, resistant to ideologization, and operative for congregational resilience, the task undertaken in the section that follows.

Reconstructing providence as participatory, Christological, and hope-filled

The reconstruction offered here develops the thesis formulated in the introduction: providence is not an explanatory theorem satisfying curiosity about the causes of every event, but a grammar of faith shaping how a believing community stands within history. This shift is not a dilution of the doctrine but its purification: a grammar is more fundamental than a theorem, since it shapes the whole manner of speaking, praying, and acting. As grammar, providence does not answer every question of why, yet it enables congregations to question, lament, work, and hope before God without losing their footing.

The first foundation of the reconstruction is Christological. Following Barth's direction, divine concurrence (*concursus*) must be read from the point at which God most manifestly accompanies the world: the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The God who preserves is not a sovereign governing from a safe distance but the God who precedes, accompanies, and follows his creation within his own history.²⁵ For congregations enduring polycrisis, job loss, social disconnection, and ecological anxiety, a christological providence means that their suffering is not a sign of God's absence but the field of his presence. The resilience born of this

²¹ Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/3, 58–60.

²² Webster, "Providence," 211–213.

²³ Fergusson, *The Providence of God*, 8–10.

²⁴ Kotzé, "The Doctrine of Providence in South African Theologies," a3610.

²⁵ Barth, *Church Dogmatics* III/3, 90–92.

conviction differs qualitatively from optimism: it does not deny the wound, but it refuses to let the wound speak the final word.

The second foundation is eschatological. Jürgen Moltmann shows that Christian hope is not an escape from the world but a power that revolutionizes and transforms the present; eschatology is not the closing chapter of dogmatics but the medium of Christian faith itself.²⁶ Applied to providence, this means that God's governance (*gubernatio*) is not read backward as a justification of the status quo but forward from God's promise of a new heaven and a new earth. An eschatological providence frees the doctrine from its historic conservative tendency to legitimate the existing order and converts it into an energy of hope that moves congregations to participate in the renewal of the world precisely when the world appears to be collapsing.

The ecclesiological consequence of this hope has been elaborated within global theological discourse. Naudé, in dialogue with Moltmann, shows that the marks of the church must be read from the triad of hope, the cross, and the power of the Spirit, so that the church becomes an exodus community moving toward God's future while standing alongside those who suffer.²⁷ The church God preserves is not a church embalmed in its former shape but a church enabled to change without losing its identity. For the digital church, this offers a liberating theological framework: migration into digital space need not be mourned as loss but may be read as part of the church's pilgrimage toward God's future, provided the direction of that pilgrimage continues to be set by God's promise rather than by market logic.

The third foundation is critical-economic. Kathryn Tanner shows that a capitalism dominated by financialization shapes human subjectivity in a totalizing way, chaining workers to a past of debt, disciplining the present, and colonizing the future, and that Christianity has the resources to break the new spirit of capitalism.²⁸ Within the framework of providence, Tanner's critique exposes a counterfeit providence: a market that presents itself as an inevitable order determining everyone's fate. To confess God, not the market and not the algorithm, as the preserver and governor of history is the most fundamental liberating act of faith in the digital age; it dethrones economic determinism and opens space for alternative practices within the congregation.

The fourth foundation is pneumatological, and here lies the principal constructive contribution of this article. Providence does not operate merely over congregations but through the Holy Spirit, who indwells and empowers the community. Kgatle's study of large Pentecostal churches during the pandemic shows how crisis prompted a theology of care that mobilized community resources for the vulnerable, moving beyond prosperity rhetoric.²⁹ In pneumatological light, *concursus* acquires a concrete face: God accompanies the world through the body of Christ animated by the Spirit, so that a congregation's diaconal ministry amid economic crisis becomes a tangible instrument of divine preservation rather than mere social activity.

²⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. James W. Leitch (London: SCM Press, 1967), 16–18.

²⁷ Piet J. Naudé, "The Marks of the Church in South Africa Today – In Dialogue with Jürgen Moltmann on His 80th Birthday," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 27, no. 3 (2006): 944–963, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v27i3.196>.

²⁸ Kathryn Tanner, *Christianity and the New Spirit of Capitalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 1–3.

²⁹ Mookgo S. Kgatle, "Megacostalism and the Pandemic: Developing a Megacostal Theology of Care beyond COVID-19," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 45, no. 1 (2024): a3018, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v45i1.3018>.

This pneumatological grounding gains conceptual precision when read through the Irenaean motif of God's two hands, as developed by Joas Adiprasetya. Adiprasetya proposes a twofold reading: through the Son the cosmos is embraced panentheistically (all things are in God) and through the Holy Spirit God pervades all things, a movement he names *theenpanism*, the presence of God within all things.³⁰ For the doctrine of providence, this two-hands motif addresses a difficulty that has long burdened the classical formulation. *Conservatio* and *gubernatio* tend to be imagined as divine action from above or from outside, so that providence readily sounds like remote control exercised over a self-running system. The second hand of God, the Spirit, renders that preservation present from within, as a power suffusing the very structure of creation. God preserves the world not only by upholding it from without but by indwelling and permeating it.

At this point, cyberspace cannot be excluded. If the Spirit pervades every dimension of creation, the question is no longer whether God can be present in digital space but how that presence is to be recognized and answered. Susilo, in his discourse on cyber-pneumatology, proposes that the Holy Spirit's work is not obstructed by digital mediality: cyberspace, as a cultural artifact born of a human creative capacity that is itself a gift, falls within the reach of the Spirit's life-giving work.³¹ This article accepts that direction and draws it explicitly into the framework of providence: cyberspace is one of the fields of *concursus*, where God accompanies his creation through the third person of the Trinity. Digital providence is therefore not a forced metaphor, but the logical consequence of confessing that the Spirit is not bound to geography; the Spirit who brooded over the waters at the beginning (Gen. 1:2) does not halt at the threshold of servers and network protocols.

This confession, however, demands critical safeguards as rigorous as those applied to the other moments of providence. To say that the Spirit can work in cyberspace is by no means to say that whatever occurs in cyberspace is the work of the Spirit. Quite the reverse: because digital space is engineered by extractive interests, as Zuboff has shown, pneumatological discernment becomes an urgent ecclesial task—distinguishing the movement of the Spirit that builds up the body from the movement of algorithms that harvest attention. The criteria of discernment are christological and ethical rather than technological: where fellowship is built, the weak are embraced, and truth is spoken in love, there the marks of the Spirit may be recognized; where what occurs is fragmentation, commodification, and self-aggrandizement, there the Spirit is not at work, however spiritual the packaging.

This pneumatological dimension also links providence to the charisms (*charismata*). As an earlier study of the actualization of gift-based ministry in the digital age has shown, the gifts of the Spirit are not bound to any particular medium; the digital era in fact opens new space for the actualization of gifts that build up the body of Christ.³² If the gifts are the Spirit's means of preserving the congregation, then congregational digital competencies, such as media literacy, creativity in content, and the capacity to build networks, may be read theologically as part of the church's providential equipment today. Providence is therefore not merely

³⁰ Joas Adiprasetya, "Dua Tangan Allah Merangkul Semesta: Panentheisme dan Theenpanisme," *Indonesian Journal of Theology* 5, no. 1 (2017): 24–41, <https://doi.org/10.46567/ijt.v5i1.33>.

³¹ Ruwi Hastuti and Yushak Soesilo, "Cyber-pneumatology: Diskursus pekerjaan Roh Kudus di ruang siber," *KURIOS* 11, no. 2 (2025): 472–482.

³² Harls Evan R. Siahaan, "Aktualisasi Pelayanan Karunia di Era Digital," *EPIGRAPHE: Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan Kristiani* 1, no. 1 (2018): 23–38, <https://doi.org/10.33991/epigraphe.v1i1.7>.

something congregations undergo passively but something in which they are actively involved.

The synthesis of these four foundations yields what may be called a participatory providence: *conservatio* read christologically guarantees that the identity and the existence of the congregation rest upon God's faithfulness rather than upon successful technological adaptation; *concursus* read pneumatologically—now enriched by the motif of the two hands of God—summons the congregation to become God's coworkers in his work of preserving the world, including within the Spirit-suffused cyberspace; and *gubernatio* read eschatologically sustains a hope that polycrisis cannot extinguish. All three are guarded by the critical safeguards of Berkouwer, Fergusson, and Kotzé so they do not degenerate into speculation, denial of suffering, or ideology. This grammar is now ready to become a foundation for the resilience of digital church communities.

Providence as the foundation of digital church resilience

Resilience is defined theologically within the framework of this article: the capacity of a faith community to preserve its identity, its fellowship, and its mission under pressure, not by virtue of its own adaptive strength but by virtue of its rootedness in the God who preserves. This definition distinguishes ecclesial resilience from mere organizational continuity. A church may survive institutionally, possessing broadcast channels, followers, and income, while losing its soul because platform logic drives it. Conversely, a small congregation that is organizationally fragile may prove theologically robust. Participatory providence provides the architecture for this second kind of resilience, set out below through the three grammatical moments.

That translation requires an awareness that theology and technology shape each other. Campbell and Garner maintain that faith communities always negotiate technology on the basis of their history, core values, and practices, so what is needed is a reflective networked theology rather than blind adoption or blind rejection.³³ Such negotiation requires criteria, and this is where the doctrine of providence does its work: it gives congregations a theological measure for judging which technologies serve God's preservation of fellowship and which erode fellowship for the sake of engagement metrics. Without doctrinal criteria, the church's negotiation with technology will always be won by whichever party's design is the most addictive.

Before those three grammatical moments are set out, the mode of presence that sustains them all must be made explicit. The resilience of digital church communities does not rest on the conviction that God surveys cyberspace from afar but on the confession that the Holy Spirit indwells that community wherever it gathers, including when the gathering is network-mediated. Here the motif of *theenpanism* discussed above acquires its operative force: because the Spirit pervades every dimension of creation, a congregation gathered online is not accessing a broadcast *about* God's presence but standing *within* the field of that presence.³⁴ The consequence is immediate and practical: the proper pastoral question for the digital church is not whether online worship is valid but whether a congregation's digital practice gives room

³³ Heidi A. Campbell and Stephen Garner, *Networked Theology: Negotiating Faith in Digital Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 21–23.

³⁴ Adiprasetya, "Dua Tangan Allah Merangkul Semesta."

for the Spirit to build up the body or instead obstructs it. Ecclesial resilience is thus a pneumatological question before it is a technological one.

The first moment, *conservatio*, sustains identity's resilience. In digital space, congregational identity is continually drawn into an attention economy that treats human beings as a source of behavioral surplus to be harvested and steered.³⁵ The conviction that God upholds the congregation's existence rather than view counts, followers, or virality frees the digital church from the tyranny of metrics. Practically, *conservatio* generates counter-formative disciplines: rhythms of worship and prayer that are not subject to the algorithm, measures of ministry success set theologically, and the courage to be absent from a given platform when presence there would betray the congregation's identity as a people preserved by God.

The second moment, *concursus*, sustains participatory resilience, and its most concrete test is inclusion. Amenyedzi shows that a digital church designed with accessibility in mind opens participation to persons with disabilities who have long been marginalized within the physical church, so that digital ecclesiology must be developed as an inclusive ecclesiology.³⁶ Within the grammar of providence, this finding carries real weight: digital space can become an instrument of *concursus*—a means by which God accompanies and gathers those whom the physical order has sidelined. A congregation participating in God's work of preservation will evaluate its digital innovation not by its sophistication but by who can now take part who previously could not.

The third moment, *gubernatio*, sustains missional resilience. Hartono argues that the Great Commission must be actualized within the context of the digital era, so that digital spaces become legitimate mission fields for the church today.³⁷ Read through providence, digital mission is not a strategy of spiritual marketing but participation in God's *gubernatio*, which directs history—including the history of technology—toward his redemptive purpose. This conviction also disciplines digital mission: because God governs, the church is freed from the missional panic that would justify algorithmic manipulation, spiritual clickbait, or monetizing the congregation. A mission rooted in providence can afford to be patient, honest, and sustainable.

The resilience of digital church communities must also be built across generations. Subowo shows the urgency of building a digital spirituality for Generation Z, who are born and formed within the digital ecosystem, so they have the spiritual depth to filter the flow of information and shape algorithms.³⁸ The doctrine of providence supplies the content of such a spirituality: the conviction that God upholds their lives gives young people an anchor amid the existential anxiety continually produced by a culture of comparison on social media and by the economic uncertainty of their future. A digital spirituality without doctrine becomes aesthetics; doctrine without spirituality becomes an archive. Resilience requires both.

Providence further orders relationships wisely, both onsite and online. The empirical data from Indonesian congregations showing a strong longing for bodily fellowship must not be

³⁵ Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, 93–95.

³⁶ Seyram B. Amenyedzi, "Disability and Digital Ecclesiology: Towards an Accessible Online Church," *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 80, no. 1 (2024): a9599, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v80i1.9599>.

³⁷ Handreas Hartono, "Mengaktualisasikan Amanat Agung Matius 28:19-20 dalam Konteks Era Digital," *KURIOS: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 4, no. 2 (2018): 157–166, <https://doi.org/10.30995/kur.v4i2.87>.

³⁸ Adhika Tri Subowo, "Membangun Spiritualitas Digital bagi Generasi Z," *DUNAMIS: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristiani* 5, no. 2 (2021): 379–395, <https://doi.org/10.30648/dun.v5i2.464>.

read as a verdict against the digital church but as a reminder that God's preservation embraces the wholeness of the human being as an embodied creature.³⁹ Jung's conceptual shift from "online church" to "church-online" becomes salutary precisely within the framework of providence: God preserves his people through both modes, so that the church need not choose between physical romanticism and digital utopianism.⁴⁰ A robust hybrid ecclesiology accepts both spaces as fields of divine *concursus*, each with its own integrity and limits.

Finally, in the Indonesian context, participatory providence resonates with communal wisdom long alive in the culture: *gotong royong* (mutual assistance), the congregational *arisan* (rotating savings association), and the solidarity networks of the extended family. When polycrisis presses upon the household economies of congregants, practices of mutual bearing coordinated through digital channels, from diaconal care organized in messaging groups to online fundraising, may be construed as an extension of God's preserving hand working through secondary causes and, within the pneumatological framework developed here, as a sign of the Spirit's presence suffusing those very networks. Here doctrine becomes doxology: a congregation that experiences God's preservation through its neighbors will glorify God, and that praise is itself, as Calvin insisted, the intended fruit of the knowledge of providence: thankfulness when circumstances are favorable, patience when they are not, and an astonishing release from anxiety about what is to come.⁴¹

Conclusion

This article has constructed a doctrine of *providentia Dei* as a foundation for the resilience of digital church communities amid global, social, and economic polycrisis. The survey of the tradition shows that the classical grammar of providence, such as *conservatio*, *concursus*, *gubernatio*, remains a rich theological resource, yet requires purification from its two historic pathologies, speculative determinism and ideologization, through christological, eschatological, pneumatological, and critical-economic grounding. The resulting reconstruction, a participatory providence, demonstrates its operative power for the digital church: *conservatio* roots congregational identity against algorithmic commodification and the tyranny of metrics; *concursus* summons congregations to participate in God's preserving work through an inclusive and diaconal digital ministry; *gubernatio* sustains an eschatological hope that frees digital mission from panic and manipulation.

The novelty this study offers can be stated concisely: whereas the literature on the digital church in Indonesia generally halts at the ecclesiological and practical level, this article situates the question at the level of theology proper and shows that God's providential presence in cyberspace is pneumatological. Through the motif of the two hands of God, the Holy Spirit is recognized not as a supplement to the doctrine of providence but as the hand that suffuses creation from within, so that digital space ceases to be a neutral territory lying beyond the reach of divine care. The consequence is at once normative and critical: the digital church is called to pneumatological discernment, distinguishing the movement of the Spirit that builds up the body from the movement of algorithms that harvest attention, by Christological and ethical rather than technological criteria.

³⁹ Pakpahan et al., "Congregation Members' Response."

⁴⁰ Jung, "Church in the Digital Age."

⁴¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.xvii.11.

The resilience of the church in the digital age is therefore not first of all an achievement of technological adaptation but the fruit of the dogmatic conviction that the triune God, known in Jesus Christ and present through the Holy Spirit, truly preserves, accompanies, and governs the world—the digital world included—until the fulfillment of his promise. Further research might test this framework empirically among hybrid congregations in Indonesia, develop indicators of pneumatological discernment usable in congregational formation, and extend the dialogue to the ethics of artificial intelligence.

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