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## **Theological Insight of Digital Religion**

### ***Teološki vpogled v digitalno religijo***

*Abstract:* This research aims to analyse the emergence of digital religion from its historical root, to formulate its definition, and finally build the theological construction on how religion and digital media are closely related and mutually influence the contemporary community. Using the integrated critical thinking approach in the literature review, the conclusion can be drawn that the theological perspective of digital religion is crucial. The traditional construction of how to behave according to the religion being followed has to broaden its horizon and cover the explanation of divinity in media digitalization. It is necessary to be done so that the religious congregation and even the academicians accept it as part of the divine work in the 21st century and still maintain it in the path to keep the Christianity faith. This research investigates and contributes to the thinking collaboration of theology and computer sciences in digital theology.

*Keywords:* digital religion, digitalization, religion, internet, online religion, contemporary faith, digital theology

*Povzetek:* Namen raziskave je analizirati pojav digitalne religije od njenih zgodovinskih začetkov, oblikovati njeno definicijo in na koncu zgraditi teološko konstrukcijo o tem, kako so religija in digitalni mediji tesno povezani – in na sodobno družbo tudi vzajemno vplivajo. Z uporabo metode integriranega kritičnega mišljenja v pregledu literature je mogoče sklepati, da je teološka perspektiva digitalne religije ključna. Tradicionalna struktura, kako ravnati v skladu z religijo, ki ji sledimo, mora svoje obzorje razširiti in zajeti razlago božanskosti v medijski digitalizaciji. To je nujno, da jo bodo verske skupnosti, pa tudi znanstveniki sprejeli kot del Božjega dela v 21. stoletju in jo na poti ohranjanja krščanske vere še naprej podpirali.

*Ključne besede:* digitalna religija, digitalizacija, religija, internet, spletna religija, sodobna vera, digitalna teologija

## 1. Introduction

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The world has changed totally in the era of the Internet and communication technology which comes along with it. Since the Internet is present in humans' lives, a variety of new technologies related to the Internet have taken turn to appear with the speed which gives humans no option but to adapt with it. Mansour (2022a) explains the impact of this phenomenon. The development of that digital technology creates a new era where a real life is mixed with the virtual world in the daily life. This is caused by the blurred boundary line between the real world and the virtual world in explaining the perception of humans on reality. The Internet which at first was understood as the physical reality existence has changed to become a new world that even exceeds reality. That world has no geographical boundary, is without the wall of barrier, is accessible, and has the space construction exceeding the physical space dimension.

The digital technology trend brings consequences in a form of social and cultural change. Human behaviour experiences a shift following the universal ongoing change. Martono (Martono 2021, 17) and Sztompka (2017) explain that one of the reasons causing the social change is the discovery of new findings in life in a form of technology having the impact toward the change of the human interaction. The findings influence human behaviour in all dimensions, creating a broader horizon and touching all levels existing in the community. The digital technology has changed and led the community into a new situation in doing the activities, such as doing business, working, learning, playing, communicating, including the way people embrace their religion and carry out their religious practice. Tsuria (2021) concluded that the Internet and technology accompanying it have given a very real impact toward not only every individual but also institutions, starting from family, education, government, and religion. Digital segmentation influencing individuals and institutions mutually contributes to the role in the conceptualization and birth of digital religion.

As a new way of embracing a religion, this paper will report on the research about the theological aspect of digital religion. There are not many researchers conducting this kind of research because the discussion on the same theme is more on the practical aspect, just like what Hutching (2007) did; the example is reporting on how the religious practice activities have shifted into online activities during the pandemic. Furthermore, the examples are the research results reported by Campbell and Virtullo (2016), Helland (2005), Lovheim (2014) that indeed bring out the theme on digital religion but focus more on the historical aspect of the birth of such a phenomenon, its connection with technology and the role of communication media in religion as well as the impacts incurred by it. Siuda (2021) showed a little difference and progress by presenting the research on the digital religion mapping so that everyone can understand the existing categories in this topic. Therefore, this research will fill in the gap appearing in the previous research that has not touched the theological aspect at all.

The theological perspective of digital religion is very important. The traditional construction of embracing a religion so far has had the established and stable

theological foundation. However, with the presence of media digitalization, it is necessary to have new explanations in the midst of the religious congregation and even among the academicians so that such a phenomenon can be accepted as part of the Divine way of work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and can maintain it in the path to keep the Christianity faith (Zaluchu 2022). Certainly, on one hand, there are controversial things happening every time there is a change going on in the Christianity, and the theological foundation will become the filter which will form the understanding of the Christian people on the matters allowed to occur virtually and, on the things, maintained in the physical form. On the other hand, the theological perspective will end or at least minimize the tension and controversy happening among the religious congregation on the role of technology in religion. Therefore, what becomes the main objective of this research is to analyze the theological concept of digital religion.

## **2. Method**

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To achieve the research objective mentioned above, there were several steps of analysis carried out. First of all, the paper will explain the historical root of digital religion. Afterwards, it will formulate the definition of digital religion as the benchmark to do discussion and analysis. The last step is to discuss the theological concept, starting from the controversy of refusal toward the conceptual agreement. The entire way of thinking and the procedure of qualitative analysis apply the critical integrated approach as described by Gilbert (2018) via the literature review (Vera 1991).

## **3. Discussion**

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### **3.1 The Historical Root of Digital Religion**

The term digital religion did not just appear suddenly. Referring to the study conducted by Heidi Campbell (2013a) in her book entitled *Digital Religion – Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*, it is revealed that there are four historical waves of media involvement in the religious practice. The embryo of the first wave appeared when the Internet started to be involved by religious institutions as the extended medium of the offline traditional religious practice into the online one. The theoretical construction in this wave was still centered in the descriptive effort to explain the online phenomenon and the migration of religious practice into new ways. Campbell stated that at the beginning the Internet technology was used as the medium to facilitate religious discussion in a form of a mailing list, the discussion groups with networking. In this phase, the Internet seemed to facilitate religious discussion, dogma dissemination, and the spread of other religious information. The digital community from the religious

congregation was formed in this era. Then, the second wave emerged when religion and digitalization were brought at the conceptualization level. The Internet no longer only facilitated religious information or discussion but also became the new medium to preach and carry out the religious rites and rituals. In this phase, new and creative forms have appeared in the middle of the community on religious practice both functionally and existentially.

Web and the Internet have become a wide place, where the ideas on God echo, where faith can be formed, and where collective spirit in spirituality emerges collectively (Chama 1996). The second phase is the categorization phase where various concrete typologies are attached as religious identity. This categorization aims to identify the trend happening in the online religious practice.

The third wave is the interconnection phase between the offline and online religious practice explained into various theories and method identification. The theoretical conceptualization appearing in the third wave aims to build the analysis toward the offline religious community in relation to the presence of new media facilitating the conventional religious practice. In the analysis of Campbell (2013b), nowadays humans have arrived at the fourth wave. In this phase, deeper exploration on digital technology implementation is performed to embrace, carry out, and support religious practice. This wave leads to the negotiation of religious actors between the offline and online lives, and how the two lives are mutually related, complete, and support each other. This wave brings new concepts about how to embrace a religion in the contemporary community where media have taken over many things whether they are at the macro or micro level, or whether they are sacred or profane. Referring to that historical explanation, it can be concluded that digital religion is the result of technology and Internet media involvement in religiosity practice.

Media involvement in the practice of religiosity both individually and institutionally is transformational where the offline religious ways or conventional religious ways are conducted with the new ways conducted online via the Internet. The use of the Internet for the religious interest has begun since the Internet was present in the middle of the community for almost three decades. At the beginning, the Internet became the space to discuss rituals and beliefs in the 1980s. Various discussion forums emerged in the Internet networking. This was also followed with the establishment of specific religious online conversation groups. Afterwards, the use of the Internet developed in the 1990s with the presence of the religious groups, and many more religious resources could be found online. Virtual church started to be established. From the beginning of the 2000s up to now, the use of the Internet for the interest of religion has been vast and very deeply integrated. The churches not only have the websites but also start the full digital service. The Internet has become an inclusive part of the church spiritual service and other religious institutions. Following the technology media providing various platforms, almost all spiritual resources, performances, content (preaching, religious rituals, songs, the learning of the Bible), and even the pastoral service have shifted into the digital service (Campbell 2011a; Hutchings 2011;

Mullins and Schmitt 2011). Thus, it can be concluded that the era of digital religion has begun when the elements of classical religion have been transformed into digitalization.

Several characteristics of the transformation, among others, can be seen as follows. First, the Internet has completely become the medium of religious information. In its report on Pastor's and the Internet, Barna Group presented the data that there has been a significant increase of data on the use of the Internet for the interest of religion and the search for religious information. The survey also discovered that besides the pragmatic usage, the priests use the Internet to prepare their preach and do preaching, give service, and build the pastoral relationship, including the interaction through conversations, discussion, prayers, and counselling. It is concluded by Barna that the Internet has become and will continue to become vital to build connection, to outreach, and even to do mental counselling without paying attention to the form, size, location, or demography of the church (Barna 2015). The descriptive report of Barna has clearer meaning through the research of Helland that sociologically observes that the wave entering the virtual world has become the trend among the religious organizations. They have made the Internet and all new things from the World Wide Web as the place of presence, the control tool, and the media to state the authority on the environment that keeps on growing and developing. The perspective of Helland is also similar to see that the progress of the Internet has become the trigger for social change where every individual either embracing an official popular religion or not has made the digital world as a new environment to state various expressions of their religion freely (Helland 2004). Relying on the findings of Barna and the analysis of Helland, it can be concluded that the Internet can become the new spiritual environment for the contemporary community.

### **3.2 Conceptual Definition**

Digital religion cannot be seen etymologically merely by uniting the definitions of the words "digital" and "religion." Digital religion is a cultural product born out of the contemporary community, with technology as part of its life. In this case, the community and digital technology have mutually influenced each other in connection with religion. Therefore, it cannot be separated from the community contextual situation. Religion and religious practice have affected the community via digital technology. On the contrary, the community contextual situation brings changes toward the way to embrace a religion and its implementation in the practice (Grant and Stout 2019). The integration between digital technology and religion eventually creates a much bigger picture on the religiosity trait of a community and all are summarized in the concept of digital religion. This integration pattern is dynamic and leads to the change after change because the digital technology itself is not a static product, but it develops more and will be more involved in religious institutions and practice. Based on that, the theoretical construction of digital religion cannot be defined in the etymological approach, but it has to be considered as a complete concept explaining the phenomenon of embracing

a religion for the modern community.

Campbell (2013) explained that digital religion does not only refer to the religion presented and articulated online but also refers to how the digital media and space are established and formed by religious practice. Campbell (2013) realized that the concept of digital religion at the beginning was used to explain the presence of religion at the border of the virtual world. However, its definition then expanded to explain the type of community and new religious rituals showing that there is alliance between computer technology and religion in the spiritual life in the virtual world. Campbell (2013) seems to agree with Bauwens (1996) stating that in the virtual world, the active spiritual life keeps going on, although it is realized that this term has been applied a lot in various contexts based on the approach of each discipline. Dawson and Cowan (2004), for instance, use this term to identify religious organizations or groups existing in the virtual world. Nonetheless, for Meyer (2013), digital religion is not just related to the religious mediation digitally. Beyond mediation, digital religion is an extended product of how to embrace a religion in an analog way because it is present in a space called cyberspace. Even though it resembles a physical space, religious cyberspace is the imitation prototype of the real world (physical world) used for the interests of religion and spirituality. As explained by Helland (2005), digital religion is not merely about embracing or practicing "religion" in the digital format and performance, but it also talks about the presence of a new religious space where there are various mixtures of all the cultural components of the contemporary community.

If religious practice has so far taken place in the real physical public space, now there is a significant transition happening with the emergence of the physical space imitation or the virtual world that also becomes a human religiosity medium. In this case, the thinking of Helland (2005) seems to have the tendency toward the exposition of Campbell (2013) that digital religion is more appropriately associated as "religion-web," than a constructive proposal on "the third digital space" (Hoover and Echchaibi 2012).

To deal with definitive diversity, a middle ground has been built by Campbell (2013), and it functions also as the inter and intra disciplinary concept. Quoting the complete explanation on the word "definitive" from Campbell, digital religion is a technological and cultural space appearing when the offline and online religious domains are mixed and mutually integrated. In this definition, Campbell describes digital religion as a bridge connecting and expanding the online religious practice and space into the offline religious context and vice versa. Inside of it, we can see the mixture of online cultural traits (such as interactivities, convergence, and content produced by audience) and traditional religion (such as the belief pattern and rituals related to the historical foundation and community). Campbell (2013) agreed with Hoover and Echchaibi (2014) that suggested that when the traditional religious practice is carried out wholeheartedly and encounters with digital culture, a "third space" is formed, so a new meaning appears. It can be concluded that digital religion explains not only how digital technology and culture form religious practice and faith but also how religion attempts to make

the new media context as the culture with the established ways and faith on the reality trait and a bigger world.

From the variety of definitions and perspectives above, it can be concluded that digital religion has two definitions. First, it is a term to explain the role of digital technology in its endeavor to facilitate religious practice and faith. Referring to this definition, digital religion is understood as technology mediatization toward religion and its practice. Moreover, for the second definition, it is considered a little bit more advanced and complex because religion is not only understood as something mediated, but it also unites hybridlike and becomes inclusive both epistemologically and in its practice so that its conceptual construction does not stand by itself but is part of a vice versa relationship between something classical-traditional and something digital-based. Both of those definitions provide guidance that in the digital religion concept, the Internet is not only a facilitator but also an important part in the contemporary religious discourse.

### 3.3 Theological Construction

There are two main parties which are contrary to one another in viewing digital religion theologically. The first party is the hardliner Christian group that refuses any form of religious digitalization. Their main reason is very rational, although it is normative. According to them, online religious practice cannot be considered to be able to replace the authentic experience when carried out offline. The main issues they reveal are the rite authentication, liturgy, and sacrament, as well as theological truth. This party seems to be represented by, for example, the thinking of a priest in Silicon Valley named Jay Y. Kim in his book published by InterVarsity Press in 2020 entitled *Analog Church: Why We Need Real People, Places, and Things in the Digital Age*. What is interesting is that the same author in 2022 published his newest book entitled *Analog Christian: Cultivating Contentment, Resilience, and Wisdom in the Digital Age*. The first book was written by Kim during the world transition era from one hundred per cent isolation era to the limited isolation era through the presence of the hybrid system in religious activities. Meanwhile, the second book was written after the world pandemic is declared as endemic by many countries in the world. The main thesis conveyed by Kim in his book on Analog Church is that the physical or onsite religious activities like in the era before the pandemic happened are the real, authentic religious activities which are more suitable according to the Bible and remain needed.

According to Kim (2020), there are many church leaders that have done the best things, but they are encouraged by myths believing that new things are always better than the old ones. This is what Kim calls as the relevance trap that brings the church to fall by sacrificing many things and judging those many things with the digital and technological perspectives. All of these have been triggered from the response of the church toward changes and such changes referred to have been done many times previously, such as adapting and following the culture of the era. The main argumentation from Kim centers at the transcendence and not at relevance. In other words, since the Christian church was established

in the era of apostles, the Christian religious institutions have invited people to experience transcendence and relevance. Although it is admitted that relevance cannot be ignored, the message of transcendence in the church is related to life and daily situation of the people that serve the church. The ways to deliver the message of transcendence always have the reverse and uncommon pattern. For instance, the main becomes the last and the last becomes the main, the rich become the poor and the poor become the rich, where foreigners feel that meaning is owned and all that become allies can encounter something that is totally different from the familiar things that tend to repeat. Hence, Kim (2020a, 8–14) challenges the church that the reverse thing can be done by the church in this digital era, which becomes the invitation to become analog and to escape from digital hiding, for the sake of bridging the separation caused by technology, and to become humans together with others in the truth meaning, gathering in the alliance to be changed and transformed in the real time in the space in between and with the real ways. All that identification becomes the main foundation of Kim's claim that coming into contact with one another in an alliance, introducing each other, laughing together, and having the real interaction can only be carried out in an analog meeting. The same presentation in the digital era is actually the deceit of technology which makes everyone become more impatient, shallower, and more isolated. That is the effect of the digital technological performance that always offers three things, namely speed, choices, and individualism. McKnight (in Kim 2020) wrote in the preface of Kim's book that the analog church theology follows the Christ incarnation pattern that God sends a very mighty important message to humans accepted in the physical condition through Christ that is incarnated. He sent His child born through the womb of a woman physically, to serve the real world and gather his disciples and the real people with the real body to follow Him. He even died on the Cross as something real. The event is not engineered or a fake simulation. With all of these realities, it is seen that God revealed Himself in something analog, not something digital. His messages were written and delivered via papyrus scrolls, printed or in a form of files, but the essence of the messages is His real personality since birth, living and showing His works, dying, reviving, and then ascending to Heavens, even when someday He will return. All those are the chain of real and physical events. Therefore, McKnight in Kim (Kim 2020b, 5–7) firmly refuses all introduction of Christ to be conducted outside the physical reality because going to the church physically cannot be replaced digitally. What is important about the life of church is that all are physical: knowing, loving, doing ritual activities, listening to preaches, singing, and worshipping God, walking toward a tribune to receive communion; all those are the things which make the church as church. In other words, the real church just refers to the church conducted offline or called analog church. Digital technology might be able to imitate all real church activities in its physical form, but when we refer to the thinking of Kim (2020) and McKnight (in Kim 2020), what is being offered is merely a symbolic "deceit" that will make people remain isolated in its digital connection in the digital church.



Even though he does not directly refuse the presence of digital religion, Beaty (2022) in his review in his book entitled *Celebrities for Jesus: How Personas, Platforms, and Profits are Hurting the Church* showed the drawbacks that are present as the supporters of church digitalization do not even realize them. The emergence of the Christian famous people and religious celebrities have developed the great publicity through digital media to produce the incredible public influence effect. This behavior has started to appear from the local church level or from the national or even international level; in other words, those spiritual influencers have effectively stated to their followers, "Follow me like I follow the Christ". However, the hidden motivation behind that fame turns out to lead to their own interest, without the spiritual maturity and accountability, having contradictory shadow sides with the essence of the Bible (Beaty 2022).

The Christian famous people and spiritual celebrities unexpectedly become part of Kim's (2020) fear on the digital technology impact for the church because they all develop the social power without any closeness and they seem to be in alliance, but they are actually isolated. These people do not really talk to fellow humans, but they just talk in front of a camera mediating the message digitally in the private space of everyone. The results are the abuse of power, personality investment, and individual glorification, and most of all fixation toward profits. Turkle (2017, 1) made an important note that technology is truly full of temptations because it always offers what humans desire the most. It is realized via technology that it is easy to control humans due to their vulnerability and desires. Hence, what occurs in digital connections is loneliness and fear of intimacy. Digital connections seem to be friendly, but they offer friendship illusions without the real friendship demands. All connected in the digital network actually make humans become more isolated and hidden from one another, even when everyone seems to be together digitally.

From all those opinions, it can be concluded that refusal and critical attitude toward digital religion generally have the starting point from theological authentication of things that at the beginning took place physically and then are changed and/or facilitated or mediated digitally. However, the perspectives about this are not uniformed. The group that supports digital religion embraces the theological theme that God works in and via technology. Even though there are matters that cannot be replaced digitally, it does not mean that the church mediation by technology has to be rejected completely. The main dictum conveyed is the worldview that digital technology achievement, in fact, will assist the church to realize the vision and missions of God's kingdom with new ways adjusted with the era situation.

In her book entitled *@Worship: Liturgical Practices in Digital Worlds*, Teresa Berger (2021) presents moderate thinking. She explained that actually there is no essential theological claim as the reason about humans in their religious activities which is stated not applied in digital mediation. The reason is simple. Self-existence formed and done in prayers through a variety of mediations still has the unchanged claim of basic theology. The point is that this claim understands that

human creation orientation always directs to and is the indelible longing for God. However, this longing exists in the life very much wounded by sins, and it is difficult for humans to direct themselves toward God. The incarnation of God's words in the flesh through Christ and the redemption He did on the Cross eventually set humans free from the chain of sins and accepted the answer from the deep longing. Digital mediation is just a different way to express the longing. Thus, in the end, there is no reason that human existence becomes zero just because the mediation of their religious activities involves digital media (Berger 2021). As a result, for Berger (2021), the real issue with the theological approach is not with the human existence but with the way humans choose to express their existence. That happens because digital technology mediates the contemporary subject formation with a certain way. When that "certain way" turns out to be different from what has been theologically understood so far, the root of the issue has become clearer. It means what is necessary is actually theological construction.

Siuda (2021) reported a research result on the mapping of digital religion. In one of his conclusions, he stated that at this time, separating the religious activity space between offline and online is very hard to do. Both offline and online spaces have been mixed or obscure so that it is necessary to have a conceptual framework. The idea on the conceptual framework can be applied in the theological scope. In other words, what is needed in reading and analyzing digital religion, before everything is going too far and wider, is a theologically conceptual framework.

The most interesting and comprehensive proposal on this matter has been prepared by Sutinen and Cooper (2021, 1–9) that have formulated the theologically conceptual framework in four concepts, namely what is called as digital theology, why digital theology needs to be understood deeply, how to conduct this research topic, and what is the future of digital theology like. Both of the writers built a very realistic and appropriate argument. The proliferation of Information Technology (IT) for the last thirty years encouraging fast change in every aspect of community lives (the way humans live life, work, learn, and seek for information, socialize, build intimacy, interact in family and in doing religious activities) has adapted with the newest technology. However, that fact leads to disparity in documentation. The discourse on the role of technology in various classes of community is available many more than that on the role of technology in faith expression. The works by Campbell, Hutchings, Hojsgaard, Dawson, O'Leary, Tsuria, Horsfield, and others have just appeared in the last ten years (Campbell and Tsuria 2021; O'Leary 1996; Wallis 2003; Helland 2004; Hutchings 2017). The works of those writers are limited as they present only the communication analysis, and very few really discuss the theological area. Therefore, a theologically conceptual framework is required because the phenomenon of digital religion has developed in the technological integration exploration phase in the religious phenomenon. Hence, theological conceptualization intellectually made is absolutely required.

The main thesis as the foundation of all those things above is to place Digital Theology to focus on the faith expression, similar to what happens in various Chri-

stian theological classical fields that have been studied so far by the academicians, such as exegesis and hermeneutics, systematic theology, church history, and practical and pastoral theology. Sutinen and Cooper (2021) also showed their academic position and attempted to escape from the gray area that has impeded the theologians all this time. Both writers firmly agreed that the connection between faith as spiritual and intellectual conviction, and the real expression as credo, doctrine, or concrete behavior becomes the foundation to facilitate the formation of theological dialog toward the computer science to become Digital Theology.

In the effort to construct the definition of digital theology that is capable of becoming the medium of all relevant disciplines of science, Sutinen and Cooper (2021) refer to four concepts of the definition proposed by a number of references. The following is the summary. The first definition is formulated by Steinhart (2012, 133). The formulation of the definition is more theoretical and very technical by stating that digital theology as the theology built from artificial intelligence, digital network, and virtual reality. The definition resembles more like the Apocalyptic AI theological approach. The second definition is formulated by Kolog, Sutinen, and Nygren (2016). Their definition is briefer and more concise that digital theology is technological integration into the understanding of the divine concept and the formation of the religious basic idea. The third definition is more comprehensive compared with the previous definitions formulated. Phillips, Schiefelbein-Guerrero, and Kurlberg (2019) formulated that digital theology is the use of digital technology to communicate or teach theology as the traditional academic subject, theological research which is made possible by digitalization or digital culture, the involvement of theological resources that is intentional, sustainable, and reflective with digitalization or digital culture and a reassessment of prophetic digitalization in the bright light of theological ethics. The last reference is the definition formulated from an unpublished paper written by Cooper, Mann, Sutinen, and Phillips (2021). These four writers agreed that digital theology is the field applying questions and the method of computation at a subject in theology (for instance, the sentiment analysis toward the Bible; determining church activities with geo-location metadata); and/or applying questions and the method of theology to computation (for example, theological reflection on the social media impact on the adolescent period).

Based on the references of the definitions above, finally Sutinen and Cooper (2021, 17) formulated the new construction of the digital theology definition as the field of study drawing from the disciplines of computer science and theology, where we can find the application of theological thinking and ethics in the field of digital technology; the application of the computation thinking and the design, process, and approach into the field of theology; the application of digital technology in the practice and study of theology; facilitating the making of faith meaning through a digital expression; and applying the research approach at the intersection of computer science and theology. Relying on various definitions above, eventually we can see a picture showing the position of digital religion at the intersection of two disciplines of sciences, namely theology and computer sci-

ce. However, the definition formulation is actually not really too theological and technical, or perhaps it is because of the trait of theology in this discipline that is combined with another discipline. A similar thing also happens to a brief definition revealed by Savin-Baden (2022) that digital theology is “the use of digital to study theology”.

From this definition, we can eventually see that there is actually awareness among the academicians and practitioners of social sciences, computer science, and especially theological science that digital religion is not a made-up concept, but it has a theological framework than can be held accountable academically. Those various definitions show that there is awareness in the understanding of the experts that the incision of those two disciplines of sciences, besides being considered as a new thing and being trapped at technical matters, still requires serious in-depth understanding toward its theological dimension more than its computational technique. Nevertheless, it is obvious that there is accountability of science that digital religion is part of digital theology that certainly will experience conceptual development in the future.

#### **4. Conclusion**

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The presence of theological construction of digital religion will become a discourse that assists anyone, particularly the religious congregation and the academicians, to position themselves in the divine accountability. The experts have stated their opinions that the fields of religion and media have covered a number of elaborations and explorations in a form of both oral transmission and textual practice in religious tradition, have developed to become part of media, and are represented into the digital platform. This proves that currently there is a connection mutually influencing between religion and media. Viewed from the historical context and contemporary reality, the connection is positively correlated with the historical development and human culture. Indeed, God does not exist in the Internet, but the Internet has become the tool aiding Christianity to reach its missions and helping religious people to grow and live their religious life in many situations. Understanding becomes very important. Viewing the Internet as the deliberator, the oppressor, or the instrument in the framework of digital religion is very much related to the starting point from how far humans or religious congregation build their theological concept on such a phenomenon. The involvement of Christian theology with the Internet has to see the Internet as daily reality created by humans as the natural agents and considers that people believe Christians are called to live accountably in their environment. Theology no longer stands on its own and is merely about the relationship between humans and God. Now there is a technological bridge facilitating the relationship. It is God’s words in the 21<sup>st</sup> century through human intelligence so that religious congregation do not materialize God or worship technology as God. On the contrary, they will believe in God more that He is in Heavens, which is also called the virtual world, but He is real in faith.

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