

Local Eschatologies: Reading Afterlife through the Javanese *Bersih Desa* Ritual

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Abstract

In an era marked by modernization, traditional rituals are often dismissed as obsolete or merely symbolic remnants of the past. This study challenges such assumptions by exploring *Bersih Desa*, a Javanese communal cleansing ritual, as a site of implicit eschatological expression. Far from being a purely cultural celebration, *Bersih Desa* embodies the community's deeply held hopes for spiritual continuity and post-mortem well-being. Through an ethnographic study conducted in Sumberandong hamlet, Sumberoto village in South Malang, this research investigates how local conceptions of the afterlife are embedded within ritual practices and communal narratives. Drawing on in-depth interviews with ritual leaders and participants, and employing Creswell's qualitative analysis framework, the findings reveal a rich interplay between indigenous spiritual cosmologies and formal religious teachings. This syncretic understanding sustains the ritual's vitality, functioning as a localized eschatology bridging tradition and transcendence. The study contributes to contextual theology and anthropology of religion, offering insight into how rituals like *Bersih Desa* articulate the hopes and horizons of a living tradition.

Keywords: Eschatology, Javanese culture, Bersih Desa, Afterlife, Contextual Theology

Introduction

In the context of globalization and ongoing modernization, traditional rites of local communities are often reduced to mere cultural artifacts, thus losing their spiritual and theological dimensions. The rapid advancement of global communication, the dominance of scientific rationalism, and the commodification of culture have significantly contributed to the marginalization of traditional ritual practices. Many cultural observers and modern theologians, particularly those influenced by secular worldviews, often treat these rituals as static symbols of folklore or heritage rather than living expressions of faith and transcendence. Secularistic perspectives in theology and anthropology tend to ignore the transcendental aspects contained in these cultural practices. These perspectives often highlight sociological functions, ethical norms, or identity formation, while neglecting the sacred dimensions that these rituals preserve and transmit across generations. In fact, local rites often contain eschatological narratives that articulate collective hopes for life after death. Such narratives are not merely abstract doctrines, but embodied beliefs expressed through ritual symbols, actions, and collective memory. Such rites not only function as a medium for preserving social and ecological harmony, but also as a spiritual space to interpret salvation and transcendence (Maria, 2018; Rasmussen, 2023; Siahaan, 2023). One example of a local rite that holds theological potential is *Bersih Desa* in the tradition of Javanese agrarian society. This ritual is typically performed at the beginning or end of the agricultural cycle and is marked by communal meals, offerings to ancestral spirits, symbolic cleansing of sacred places, and ritual performances that bind the people to their land and ancestors. Previous studies have generally positioned *Bersih Desa* in the frame of socio-culture, character education, or local spirituality (Kartikasari et al., 2023; Ramadhani, 2022).

These studies emphasize the social cohesion, moral values, and local wisdom encoded in the rite. However, these approaches have not explored its theological dimension, especially in relation to the discourse of Christian eschatology. The connection between local ritual meaning and Christian theological categories such as salvation, resurrection, and eternal life remains underdeveloped. Meanwhile, eschatological readings of Javanese culture still focus mostly on individualistic devotional texts such as *Syi'ir Kiyamat* and *Primbon*, with Sufistic and philological approaches (Sulistianawati et al., 2020). This kind of approach tends to ignore eschatological expressions that live in collective and embodied rites. The ritual as a communal and physical experience offers a unique perspective that is distinct from textual or doctrinal forms of eschatological reflection.

In cross-cultural contexts, a number of studies have indicated that traditional rites can hold meaningful eschatological narratives. These narratives often emerge from the community's relationship with nature, the ancestors, and the spiritual world. Juhani and Firmanto's (2021) research on Manggarai eco-eschatology and Boaheng (2023), show how traditional rites can contain ideas about death, salvation and the end of life. These studies illuminate the presence of theological depth in rituals that are often marginalized or dismissed. However, these approaches have not been sufficiently developed within the framework of Catholic theology, and it is rare to systematically integrate the dogmatic, spiritual and pastoral dimensions. The challenge remains to articulate these ritual insights within the broader

theological conversation of the Church, particularly in terms of dogmatic theology and pastoral practice.

This article offers a significant scientific contribution through three aspects of novelty: (1) a reinterpretation of the *Bersih Desa* rite as an expression of local eschatology within the framework of Catholic contextual theology; (2) a shift in analysis from an individualistic devotional approach to faith texts to an embodied and intersubjective understanding of collective rite praxis; and (3) a creative integration between the agrarian-cosmological spirituality of Javanese society and Catholic doctrine of salvation and eternal life. This novelty is important because it expands the horizon of Catholic dogmatic theology—from normative limitations to the articulation of faith rooted in living culture. Rather than imposing abstract dogmas onto cultural expressions, this approach seeks to read the symbols, gestures, and narratives of local rites as loci of theological meaning. Moreover, this approach emphasizes the pastoral significance of local rites as a medium for proclaiming the faith of eternal life in specific cultural contexts. It affirms that local communities, through their ritual practices, can bear witness to God's salvific presence in a language that is deeply embedded in their way of life.

This notion of local eschatologies is in line with global reflections on the plurality of forms of eschatology in contemporary societies. In many parts of the world, especially in postmodern and multicultural settings, theology is increasingly concerned with contextual articulation rather than uniform dogmatic assertions. Patru (2022), for example, highlights the shift in Western eschatology from dogmatism towards existential and reflective experience. She observes that contemporary eschatological discourse often centers on human anxiety, ethical responsibility, and the search for meaning amid global crises. However, such reflection is individualistic and does not touch the collective dimension internalized in local rites. It lacks the communitarian and ecological texture that is prominent in indigenous ritual practices. In contrast, *Bersih Desa* presents an eschatological imagination that is communal, agrarian, and cosmic involving humans, ancestors, the earth, and the Divine as a whole. It expresses a vision of salvation not as escape from the world, but as harmony with it.

Another study by Ubaidillah and Marpuah (2021) highlights the symbolism of gunung in Grebeg and Sekaten as a form of religious communication in the Islamic-Javanese framework. Although relevant for understanding the religious cosmology of Javanese society, the study has not yet reached the eschatological dimension explicitly, especially in relation to reflections on Catholic theology. Similarly, the study by Denar et al. (2023) on eschatological narratives in the context of Eastern Indonesia tends to be normative and has not developed local rites as living texts that can be interpreted theologically. These examples point to the ongoing gap between cultural anthropology and systematic theology, a gap this article attempts to bridge.

In a broader context, this article also aims to offer an alternative paradigm to the transhumanistic eschatological narratives developed in the West. The notions of *mind uploading* and *digital immortality*—which emphasize the extension of personal existence through technology—represent a form of eschatology that is disconnected from the body, the

community, and the earth (Garner, 2020, 2022). These visions are rooted in a hyper-individualized and disembodied anthropology. Instead, *Bersih Desa* displays a form of eschatology that does not deny human mortality, but instead celebrates human connection to the community, ancestors, and the universe in the light of agrarian spirituality. It is a ritual of remembrance, renewal, and reconnection—an eschatology of the earth.

The main problems discussed in this article are: How can the *Bersih Desa* rite be read as a form of articulation of local eschatology within the framework of Catholic contextual theology? To what extent does this rite enrich the Christian understanding of salvation, death and eternal life? These questions are not merely academic but have pastoral and ecclesiological implications. They challenge the Church to recognize the Spirit's work in cultural expressions and to develop a theology that resonates with the people's lived reality. This article offers three aspects of novelty: a reinterpretation of the *Bersih Desa* rite as an expression of local eschatology within the framework of Catholic contextual theology; a shift in analysis from individualistic devotion to the texts of faith to an understanding of embodied and intersubjective collective rite praxis; an integration between the agrarian-cosmological spirituality of Javanese society and Catholic doctrine of salvation and eternal life. Each of these dimensions contributes to a more holistic, inculturated, and responsive theological framework.

Thus, the hypothesis offered is that the *Bersih Desa* rite can be understood as a living *locus theologicus*, a cultural and spiritual space where faith in eternal life is lived communally and contextually. The rite is not only a mirror of tradition, but also a vessel of eschatological hope and theological reflection. This article is expected to expand the horizons of Catholic theology, especially in the development of eschatology that is contextual, pastoral, and open to local cultural wisdom.

Method

This research uses an ethnographic qualitative approach (Gray, 2003), which aims to read and interpret the construction of local eschatology in the Ritual *Bersih Desa* as an expression of hope for life after death in Javanese culture. The anthropology of religion approach is used to understand how communities shape, maintain and transmit their meaning of life after death through symbols, narratives and ritual practices (Yanasari, 2019). The ethnographic method was chosen because it allows researchers to “read the afterlife concept” from the internal perspective of the community, through direct involvement in the space and time of the ritual (Gray, 2003). Thus, this method not only reveals the symbolic layer of *Bersih Desa*, but also opens up the possibility of reading the ritual as a local theological system, a local eschatology that is uniquely Javanese.

The research was conducted in Sumberandong Hamlet, Sumberoto Village, Donomulyo, South Malang, a community that consistently maintains the elements of *Bersih Desa* in their intact form. This location was chosen because it offers a lively and reflective context for describing the community's narratives of salvation, ancestral spirits, and post-death life. The research subjects consisted of three main groups: traditional leaders and hamlet heads, as custodians of tradition and primary narrators of ritual interpretation; religious leaders, as

bridges between local beliefs and formal religion; and actively participating villagers, to explore grassroots perceptions of the afterlife and the spiritual meanings of rituals. In an effort to explore local eschatological narratives in this ritual, the research flow is as follows, namely In-depth interviews, with traditional leaders, religious leaders, and residents, in order to verbally understand how the community interprets life after death within their own cultural framework. In addition, Participatory observation, allowed researchers to record symbolic details and spiritual gestures in the *Bersih Desa* ritual directly, and visual documentation and local archives, were used to strengthen the narrative and historical traces of the ritual as a locus of cultural eschatology.

Data were analyzed using Creswell's thematic qualitative model, through stages: transcription and organization of data, codification based on major themes, interpretative analysis, which consciously situates rituals as a way for communities to “read” life after death (Creswell, 2014). The findings are confronted with theories of eschatology, anthropology of religion and contextual theology (Bevans, 2002, 2018). Through this approach, the research aims to elevate *Bersih Desa* not just as a cultural practice, but as a concrete manifestation of local eschatology-the way Javanese communities read and narrate life after death in symbols and ritual actions.

Findings and Discussion

Local Concept of Eschatology

There are several key concepts in local eschatology: First, the notion of local eschatology. Local eschatology is an understanding of the end of life and the afterlife that develops within a particular cultural context (Landes, 2025). In many cultures, there are various concepts related to death and life after death. Local eschatology is reflected in various traditions and beliefs that govern the relationship between humans, ancestors and the universe.

Second, the loci theologici of local eschatology. Local eschatology does not come from formal religious sacred texts, but from several sources such as folklore and mythology, which are orally passed down stories that contain values and understandings about life after death. Traditional rites and ceremonies are cultural practices that reflect beliefs about the afterlife. Another source is cultural symbols and objects, which are cultural artifacts such as puppets, architecture, and clothing that contain eschatological meanings. Local eschatology is also found in proverbs, songs, and oral narratives that are cultural expressions, which contain views about life and death (Toner, 2025).

Third, some functions of local eschatology: 1) Maintaining cosmic and social balance. Local eschatology acts as a guardian of cosmic and social order in traditional societies. Belief in the existence of other realms, such as the realm of spirits or the realm of *kasunyatan*, shapes a worldview that emphasizes the importance of harmony between humans, nature and ancestral spirits. In Javanese and Balinese communities, for example, the belief that ancestral spirits still watch over and influence the lives of the living fosters a collective consciousness to maintain social ethics, environmental sustainability and customary order. This cosmological understanding

is rooted in the social structure of society and becomes the basis for a value system that regulates collective behavior (Nova, 2022). 2) Bind communal solidarity. Through local eschatological rites such as *selamatan*, *Bersih Desa*, or Gawai traditional ceremonies, communities strengthen their sense of community and social solidarity. According to the Javanese view, there are several important elements associated with *slamatan*: the gathering of the community (*communio*) to pray, the meal as an expression of gratitude to God, prophets, saints, and ancestors (Aditya et al., 2024). These rituals are usually performed communally, involve collective participation, and contain deep meanings regarding the connection between individuals and between the world of the living and the world of spirits. The values of *gotong royong*, respect for ancestors and social responsibility are reinforced in these ritual moments, making them an important means of maintaining social cohesion amidst the dynamics of community life (Syafrita & Murdiono, 2020).

3) Provide Ethical and Moral Guidance. Local eschatology provides a moral framework that directs individual and community behavior. The belief that one's actions during life will have an impact on one's fate after death, or on one's status as an ancestor, is a strong incentive to live well, honestly and responsibly. In Balinese society, for example, the doctrines of karma and reincarnation encourage people to avoid bad deeds in order to achieve a higher rebirth. Similarly, in Javanese tradition, the belief in curious spirits serves as a reminder that every action has moral consequences that are not only worldly, but also spiritual (Seno, Interview, 2025).

4) Building cultural identity and collective history. Local eschatology is an important element in the formation of a community's cultural identity and collective history. Through narratives about human origins, relationships with ancestors and the ultimate purpose of life, communities gain a sense of belonging to their cultural and spiritual heritage. Locally specific beliefs in the afterlife, as well as the symbolism used in traditional rites, reinforce a collective sense of “who we are” and “where we come from”. This is particularly important in the face of global cultural homogenization pressures, as local eschatologies provide space for unique and meaningful expressions of identity (Abdillah, 2016).

Bersih Desa (Village Purification) Ritual

Javanese culture has many traditional rituals, one of which is *Bersih Desa* ritual. This point reviews the clean village ritual performed by the community in Sumberandong Hamlet, Dukuh Sumberoto. This ritual is held every year on Friday Legi in the month of Besar in the Javanese calendar. The structure and stages of this ritual show the continuity of tradition as well as the complexity of the relationship between humans, ancestors and the Divine in Javanese cosmology. The first stage begins long before the day of the event, when the community collectively begins to clean the neighborhood, improve access to the spring site, and prepare logistics for the ceremony. *Gotong royong* is the main basis for this preparation phase, showing that rituals do not start from a ceremonial moment, but from continuous social engagement. In an interview with the author, Seno, a traditional leader, confirmed that there is no formal ordering or organizing. Everyone knows what to do because it has been the custom for generations (Mayar, interview, March 28, 2025).

The day of the ritual begins with the community gathering early in the morning at the main location of the ritual, Sumber, a spring that is cosmologically understood as a sacred place and the source of the village's ecological life. This location is not a random choice, but was inherited by the ancestors as the spiritual center of the village. Seno emphasized that since his ancestors, the ceremony has always been held at the spring because it is believed to be the most sacred place in the village. The sacredness of this place is the first key in understanding the ritual structure (Seno, interview, March 28, 2024).

The ritual procession begins with a joint prayer led by traditional leaders and attended by residents from various religious backgrounds such as Islam, Catholicism, Protestant Christianity, and Buddhism. Prayers are performed silently and solemnly around the spring area, while offerings in the form of blessings brought by residents in the form of savory rice, *ingkung* chicken, fried chili sauce, and *serundeng*. These offerings are placed at predetermined points. The offerings are not interpreted as a form of spirit worship, but rather as an expression of gratitude and collective hope to Gusti Allah and the ancestors. Mayar, one of the residents, explains that the whole chicken offered is a symbol of complete and sincere intentions; she believes that the prayers offered in silence together have transcendent power because of the inner unity of the community (Mayar, interview, 2025).

What is interesting at this stage is the involvement of Catholics who do not contribute material offerings. Suwandi, a Catholic resident, said that in Catholic tradition, offerings have been fulfilled in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. However, their presence in prayer and willingness to agree with the common hope is considered a meaningful form of spiritual engagement (Suwandi, interview, 2025).

After the prayers and offerings are completed, the event continues with a communal meal. The food that has been provided is not only eaten together at the ceremony site, but also shared with other residents. This act is not only a form of hospitality, but also an affirmation of the principles of togetherness and social equality. This is followed by traditional art performances such as *jathilan*, *tayub*, or *wayang kulit* - depending on the ability and agreement of the community each year. Other social activities, such as bazaars, children's competitions, or public works, are also part of the ritual stage that expands the meaning of spirituality into a comprehensive social experience.

The ritual closes with the return of the community to their homes. There is no formal closing ceremony, but the meaning of the farewell is lived as an awareness that daily life must be lived with the spirit that has been renewed in the ritual. In the reflection of residents like Seno, this ritual is a form of collective prayer that Gusti Allah will always protect the *dukuh*, keep away from danger, maintain the health of residents, and provide sustenance for those who work. This intention shows that the final stage of the ritual is not a celebration, but a re-sending of the community to live life with a new spirit (Seno, interview, 2024).

Thus, the structure of *Bersih Desa* does not only include a liturgical sequence, but contains transformational dimensions: from social preparation, spiritual meaning, interfaith participation, to regeneration of community solidarity. In the frame of contemporary ritual

theory these stages demonstrate the function of rites as tools for negotiating meaning, social mediation, and the creation of a sacred, inclusive, and grounded common space.

Local Eschatology in the Bersih Desa Ritual

This study proposes that the *Bersih Desa* ritual in Sumberandong Hamlet can be interpreted as an expression of local eschatology, a system of meanings through which the community envisions the future, salvation, and world order within the framework of Javanese cosmology and culture. In this context, local eschatology refers to the way traditional communities understand and celebrate the ideal and harmonious future, characterized by the balanced relationship between humans, nature, and ancestral spirits.

Unlike Christian eschatology, which tends to be linear, apocalyptic, and oriented toward the end of history and the final judgment, local eschatology is cyclical and regenerative. It is rooted in natural rhythms and agrarian spirituality, in which salvation is not conceived as a definitive event at the end of time, but as the continuous restoration of cosmic harmony involving divine forces, human life, ancestral presence, and environmental balance.

Thus, local eschatology is not identical to the Christian theological concept of eschatology. However, both share a common function as religious frameworks for imagining the future and articulating hope for a just, peaceful, and well-ordered life, albeit shaped by different symbolic and cosmological structures. Fourth main elements in the ritual show the distinctive form of the eschatological imagination of the local community.

First, the sacredness of place as the starting point of the eschatological cosmology. The spring (Sumber) at the center of the ritual is not just a geographical place, but is understood as an axis mundi—a spiritual axis that connects humans with ancestors and the Divine. Residents believe that this place is a legacy from the ancestors, and must be maintained as a center of survival.

In the perspective of local eschatology, this kind of sacred place is a symbol of a stable and safe future for the world. It is not only a ritual space, but also the fulcrum of the cosmos, the place where the cycle of life and salvation begins and is renewed.

Second, prayers and offerings as a plea for safety and abundance. The silent and solemn communal prayer around the spring signifies a deep spiritual intention: a plea for safety, health and sustenance for the entire community. Offerings such as whole chickens and savory rice are not merely material offerings, but symbols of the collective intention and hope for a good future.

In this framework, ritual is not interpreted as a magical mechanism, but as a regenerative practice—a collective action to renew connection with the transcendent dimension and anticipate the coming of blessings in social and ecological forms (Bell, 2009).

Third, interfaith participation and solidarity as social eschatology. In this context, social eschatology refers to a theological perspective that emphasizes the realization of eschatological values—such as justice, peace, reconciliation, and solidarity, not in a distant or post-mortem realm, but within the fabric of communal life in historical time. It highlights how hope for the future is enacted through concrete practices of mutual cooperation, shared presence, and inclusive participation across religious boundaries. The involvement of Muslims, Catholics,

Protestants, and Buddhists in the *Bersih Desa* ritual exemplifies this vision, showing that salvation is not understood as the exclusive privilege of a single faith tradition, but as a collective project grounded in harmony with others, the cosmos, and ancestral heritage. Although Catholics did not offer ritual items, their active presence and affirmation of common hope signified a theological shift: that unity of intention and communal solidarity take precedence over ritual uniformity. In this light, eschatology becomes a lived, inclusive, and dialogical process, where interfaith solidarity serves as both a sign and anticipation of the eschatological promise a future shaped not by doctrinal exclusivism, but by shared commitment to justice and peace in the here and now.

This reflects an eschatological understanding that the good world is not a world of “later”, but one that is formed here and now-through social and spiritual actions that are renewed constantly in the circle of life (Nichols, 1991).

Fourth, sacred time and the cycle of life. The choice of Jumat Legi in the month of Besar is not arbitrary, but rather part of Javanese *kairos* a sacred time that connects the past, present, and future. In this context, the *Bersih Desa* ritual functions as a mechanism of ritual reintegration of time (Assmann, 2005), where the relationship with ancestors, daily life, and hopes for the future are woven into a single collective narrative.

Bersih Desa in Sumberandong is a tangible expression of local eschatology that lives within Javanese tradition. It does not depict the end of times, but rather the continuity of life in harmony with nature, others, and the Divine. Local eschatology here is regenerative, not terminal; communal, not individual; and cosmic, not dogmatic.

Some Key Concepts in the Catholic Eschatology

In this section, several key concepts in Catholic eschatology are discussed, namely: *First*, the meaning of eschatology. Eschatology comes from the word *eschaton*, which means “the last things,” and *logos*, which means “study.” Therefore, eschatology is the study of the end times or the hope for divine promises in the future (Griffiths, 2015; O’Callaghan, 2011; Ratzinger, 1988). Everything is created by God towards the fulfillment of its ultimate goal, which is meeting Him face to face. This encounter brings happiness to creation, and there they glorify God.

Second, Christianity as a religion based on the “promise of God.” God, in creating the world and saving humanity, has not left anything that has been arranged neatly and accurately since the beginning. His act of creation marks the beginning of time. And time opens space for further progress: space for God, who continues to act, create, save, provide, perfect, renew, and recreate; and space for humans, who are repeatedly offered the opportunity to respond freely to God’s gifts. The current incompleteness is part of the core of Christian revelation. The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that “here we have no lasting city” (13:14). Nevertheless, no matter how temporary and incomplete the current situation may be, the ultimate horizon of Christian life cannot be equated with incompleteness or transience, because according to the Bible, God has promised “eternal life” for those who are faithful to Him, “the resurrection of the dead” for all people, and “a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13)

(O'Callaghan, 2011). This hope for the future is not an illusion, but something attainable, and the signs of its fulfillment begin now. Therefore, there is the concept of the fulfillment of God's promise, which begins now, but its completion will occur in the eschatological age.

Third, Parousia (The Second Coming of Christ). In Catholic faith, Christ, who ascended to heaven, will return at the end of time to fulfill the Kingdom of God. This Parousia is not merely a historical event, but a moment of the establishment of divine justice, where everything will be restored according to God's plan of salvation.

Fourth, the Resurrection of the Body. The Catholic Church teaches that the resurrection of the body is part of God's promise of salvation. All those who have died will be resurrected in glorified bodies, like Christ who rose from the dead. This resurrection leads to eternal life for the righteous and judgment for those who reject God (Nitrola, 2001).

Fifth, the Last Judgment. The Last Judgment is the moment when Christ will judge all humanity based on their deeds in the world. The Gospel of Matthew 25:31-46 illustrates that those who live according to God's love and justice will receive eternal life, while those who reject His love will experience eternal separation from Him (Nitrola, 2001).

Sixth, heaven and eternal life. The highest eschatological hope in the Catholic faith is eternal happiness in the presence of God. Heaven is described as perfect communion with God, where the faithful experience perfect joy without suffering or sin (Kvanvig, 2015).

Seventh, purgatory (The Fire of Purification). For souls that still need purification before entering heaven, the Catholic Church teaches the existence of purgatory. This is the final purification condition where the soul is prepared to see God directly in His glory (Griffiths, 2015).

Eighth, hell as the rejection of God. In Catholic teaching, hell is not a place created by God to punish humans, but rather the consequence of rejecting His love and grace. Hell is the state of eternal separation from God, chosen by those who knowingly and freely reject His truth (Kvanvig, 2015).

Ninth, the new heaven and the new earth. The Book of Revelation describes that at the end of time, there will be the recreation of a new heaven and a new earth, where God will dwell with His people in a state of perfection. This emphasizes the restoration of creation that has been corrupted by sin (Nitrola, 2001). This eschatological hope serves as the foundation for Catholic life, inspiring the faithful to live in love, justice, and the hope of the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation.

Synthesis Between Eschatology in the Bersih Desa Ritual and Christian Religion

One of the most important contributions of contextual theology is its ability to open a space for critical and reflective dialogue between different horizons of meaning. The goal is not to equate or dissolve differences, but to find a transformative meeting point where these differences become a source of theological learning. In this framework, the *Bersih Desa* ritual as an expression of local eschatology in Javanese society presents a spiritual and ethical structure that, although rooted in a non-Christian cosmology, still reveals a longing for a renewed order of life. This longing has a deep resonance with the eschatological hope in the

Christian tradition, particularly in the imagination of the coming of the Kingdom of God and the restoration of creation.

Conceptually, the most fundamental difference between the two lies in the orientation of time. Local eschatology interprets time as a regenerative cycle, continuously repeated through annual rituals that maintain a balance between humans, nature, and ancestors. Meanwhile, Christian eschatology operates within a linear and teleological time frame, leading to the Parousia, resurrection, and eternal life. Although their temporal frameworks differ, both emphasize the active participation of humans in shaping the future, either through ecological-communal actions (local) or through living in love and faith in God's promises (Christian).

Another dimension that deserves deeper study is the source and orientation of salvation. In local eschatology, salvation is understood as the result of harmonizing with cosmic forces, nature, and ancestral spirits; it is collective, relational, and oriented toward the restoration of balance and peace in the present time. This worldview emphasizes the ongoing fulfillment of cosmic harmony and communal well-being in the here and now, where salvation is embedded in everyday relationships and ritual participation. In contrast, Christian eschatology is rooted in the theology of redemption, where salvation is a personal and relational gift from God in and through Christ, with its ultimate fulfillment anticipated in the future life, particularly in the promise of resurrection and eternal communion with God. Although these two eschatological frameworks are ontologically and doctrinally distinct one being immanent and cyclical, the other transcendent and linear both affirm the existence of a saving spiritual reality that guides human life toward goodness, wholeness, and a meaningful future.

However, the encounter between these two systems reaches its strongest point in the meaning of ritual. The *Bersih Desa* ritual is not just a celebration of tradition, but functions as a spiritual act that renews the human connection with nature and the Divine. Thus, it can be understood as a form of cosmic liturgy, similar to how the sacraments, especially the Eucharist in Catholic tradition, are understood as participation in the Paschal mystery of Christ that transforms life. In both contexts, ritual is not merely symbolic, but a transformative agent that connects the present time with the divine future.

Certainly, there are conceptual gaps that cannot be overlooked. Local eschatology does not recognize the doctrine of the Last Judgment, original sin, or the terminality of history as taught in the Catholic faith. However, instead of being seen as a deficiency, the absence of these categories opens up new theological space to rethink the praxis dimension of Christian hope. The ethics of balance and mutual cooperation contained in *Bersih Desa* can serve as a corrective mirror to Christian eschatology that is too metaphysical or individualistic, highlighting the importance of ecological responsibility, social justice, and community solidarity as expressions of faith in the eschaton that has already begun in this world.

Opportunities for Inculturation

The encounter between Javanese eschatology in the *Bersih Desa* ritual and Christian eschatology opens up a space for dialogical and transformative inculturation. Inculturation in

this context is not merely about adopting cultural elements into the Christian faith but becomes a process of mutual enrichment that leads to new forms of praxis in the life of faith.

First, liturgical inculturation. The *Bersih Desa* ritual, as a form of communal spirituality that emphasizes harmony among humans, nature, and the divine, can inspire a more ecological and participatory renewal of Catholic liturgy. This inculturation is not only about liturgical aesthetics, but about a sacramental understanding rooted in daily life. Liturgy thus becomes a space of hope and encounter, where local spirituality and Catholic faith meet to form a new, more grounded, ecological, and inclusive horizon.

Second, the development of ecological spirituality. Within the framework of contextual theology and the Church's ecological teachings, inculturation becomes a concrete dialogue between Christian faith and local eschatology. The *Bersih Desa* tradition shows that salvation is not only personal and transcendent, but also involves harmonious interconnectedness between humans and the universe. Concrete expressions include environmental prayers, ecological pilgrimages, Scripture services themed around ecology, and ecological retreats combining Christian contemplation with local cultural practices such as fasting, tree planting, or meditating in nature.

Third, a grounded Christian hope. Christian hope, oriented toward eternal life and union with God, takes shape through inspiration from *Bersih Desa*. Hope is not only aimed at a transcendent future, but also manifested in concrete social and ecological transformation.

Fourth, the development of practical eschatology. This inculturation culminates in a theology that speaks not only of the end times, but also encourages present-day transformation. The Church is called to be a dialogical partner listening, interpreting, and acting with local communities to build a more just and humane world.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that local eschatology as expressed in the Javanese *Bersih Desa* rite offers a meaningful theological framework that, while distinct from Christian eschatology in its cosmology, temporality, and source of salvation, nonetheless shares important resonances with Christian hope for the restoration of creation and the coming of the Kingdom of God. The study shows that *Bersih Desa* reflects a collective and regenerative vision of salvation rooted in harmony with nature and ancestors, in contrast to the linear and Christocentric orientation of Christian eschatology that points toward the Parousia and eternal life. Despite these ontological and doctrinal differences, both eschatologies recognize a saving spiritual reality that guides humanity toward wholeness and peace. By proposing the notion of praxis eschatology, this article opens a new theological space that affirms the importance of lived, contextual experiences of hope and transformation. The inculturative reading of the *Bersih Desa* ritual is not merely a cultural appreciation, but a constructive theological proposal for enriching Christian liturgy and ecological spirituality. Therefore, the article concludes that the Church is called to enter into genuine dialogue with local traditions, integrating elements of local eschatology into its praxis of faith as a way to foster a theology that is contextual,

inclusive, and responsive to contemporary global challenges, particularly in the areas of ecological responsibility, social justice, and intercommunal solidarity.

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