



RELIGION AS A MEANS OF RESTORATION: A THEOLOGICAL APPROACH TO TRAUMA AND RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE IN INDONESIA

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Abstract: *This article advocates for a constructive theological approach, in which theology is employed to interpret and give meaning to human experiences within the public sphere and daily life. One of the most profound traumatic experiences faced by individuals and societies is violence. Religious violence, in particular, represents a collective trauma, as it involves the misuse of religious symbols and language to legitimize acts of aggression. Consequently, theological efforts are essential to rediscover and reaffirm the noble values that constitute the essence and true purpose of religion, ensuring their revitalization. Importantly, the phenomenon of violence perpetrated in the name of religion does not indicate that religion itself is inherently violent; rather, it underscores the propensity of certain religious adherents toward conflict and aggression. This article also seeks to challenge and correct the stigmatization imposed by secularist perspectives, which unjustly portray religion as a fundamental source of violence, as a dangerous entity, or as a force that contributes more to harm than to good. On the contrary, this study highlights the richness of religious traditions, which encompass profound teachings of virtue, nobility, and moral greatness—values that hold significant potential for fostering healing, peace, solidarity, and reconciliation. Furthermore, this article explores the necessity of religious engagement in contemporary global and pluralistic societies. It examines how religious communities should embody their theological commitments within the public sphere in ways that contribute to minimizing human suffering and addressing the traumas that pervade modern life*

Keywords: *Trauma theology, religion as violence, religion as restoration, Revitalizing religious*

INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that throughout history, religion has been intertwined with acts of violence, including bloodshed. In Indonesia, from the Old Order (Orde Lama) and New Order (Orde Baru) to the Reformation era, the nation's historical trajectory has been marked by incidents of violence carried out in the name of religion. These events, occurring in various regions, have led to the loss of life, injuries, destruction, and the burning of hundreds of houses of worship, homes, and public facilities, leaving deep scars on Indonesian society. However, historical records of religiously motivated violence do not suggest that religion itself is inherently evil. Instead, they reveal the underdevelopment of religious consciousness within Indonesian society and highlight the susceptibility of religion to political exploitation.

The true essence of religion is to establish harmony in human relationships—among individuals, with the environment, and with God—while being oriented toward the transcendent, the sacred, and the divine. It is therefore irrational to assert that religion, by its nature, is a source of violence. Rather, religion becomes a vehicle for conflict only when its fundamental essence is eroded, particularly through its politicization.

Using the framework of trauma theology, this study advocates for a renewed theological approach in which religious traditions move beyond normative, primordial, and institutional interpretations of sacred texts. Instead, a constructive theological methodology is required—one that reinterprets religious teachings in response to the extreme experiences that individuals and communities endure in everyday life. This transformation involves reclaiming and revitalizing the noble values embedded within religious traditions, including solidarity, tolerance, peace, healing, and

reconciliation. Through these theological virtues, religion can serve as a source of compassion, listening, and accompaniment for victims of violence and oppression, while fostering pathways toward peace and recovery.

At the same time, this discourse seeks to challenge the secularist stigmatization of religion, which aims to marginalize and expel religious influence from public life, often fostering a climate of religious phobia. Furthermore, this study contributes to the theological reflection on how religious maturity can be cultivated in response to the complexities of an increasingly globalized and pluralistic world.

RESEARCH METHODS

This article employs a conceptual approach through a comprehensive analysis of relevant literature, integrating theological, philosophical, and sociological perspectives on trauma and religious violence. Given the nature of the research, the methodology follows a hermeneutical and critical-analytical framework, focusing on how theological discourse interacts with experiences of trauma, religious violence, and the restoration of human dignity. The hermeneutical approach is utilized to interpret theological and religious texts within the broader socio-historical context, ensuring that religious traditions are examined in light of contemporary issues related to trauma.

This method allows for a deeper understanding of how religious narratives contribute to both the problem and resolution of violence in society. Additionally, this article incorporates discourse analysis to critically assess how religious violence is framed in public, academic, and theological discourses. This involves examining narratives, ideological influences, and power structures that shape perceptions of religion as either a force for violence or a means of healing.

By engaging with trauma theology, the research critically explores how religious traditions respond to existential crises and suffering, particularly through frameworks of reconciliation, healing, and peacebuilding. Sources for this article include peer-reviewed journal articles, theological texts, historical records, and contemporary studies on trauma theology. The data analysis follows a thematic approach, categorizing findings into key themes such as the role of religion in conflict, the theological interpretation of suffering, and the potential of religious traditions to foster reconciliation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Understanding Trauma Theology

Trauma theology is a theological approach that engages with the lived experiences of human beings, particularly those related to psychological and emotional suffering. It seeks to interpret theological meaning within the context of pain, suffering, and existential crises, all of which are integral aspects of human existence. Aritonang asserts that trauma theology has developed in parallel with advancements in psychiatry, thereby providing a space for constructive theological reflection on trauma. Suffering often renders individuals powerless, leaving them vulnerable to trauma as they attempt to navigate life's challenges. Trauma is not merely a state of suffering but also involves existential threats that instill fear, helplessness, and a loss of control. This includes experiences such as sexual violence, domestic abuse, and prolonged exposure to perpetrators, all of which cause psychological distress and have destructive effects on the body and mind.

Trauma often raises profound theological questions: Where was God when the suffering occurred? Why did God not intervene to prevent the injustice? Why did God not send help?

These questions lead individuals into spiritual crises, where some feel defiled and unworthy, others live in fear of divine punishment, some experience a sense of abandonment by God, while others resort to self-blame or even blame God.¹

Trauma theology, therefore, incorporates contextual psychoanalytic perspectives within poststructuralist, sociocultural, and postcolonial frameworks, utilizing these theoretical lenses to critique and interpret extreme human experiences and their impact on identity and memory.² Trauma is a profoundly distressing experience that affects an individual's emotional state, disrupting their ability to relate to themselves and the external world. As a consequence of extreme suffering, trauma can strip individuals of the ability to process their emotions, understand their circumstances, and ultimately find meaning in life.³ Cathy Caruth defines trauma as an overwhelming life event that continues to haunt an individual, describing it as a symptom of a wounded soul.⁴

Stephanie and Shelly further argue that trauma is an enduring psychological wound that remains imprinted in memory and does not simply fade over time. The extreme nature of traumatic experiences disrupts an individual's ability to reintegrate into society, leading to maladaptive coping mechanisms that prevent recovery. According to Stephanie and Shelly, the process of healing from trauma requires individuals to reconstruct their vision for the future, reestablish meaningful relationships and interactions with their environment, rebuild self-confidence,

¹ Jan S Aritonang, *Teologi-Teologi Kontemporer* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2018).

² David H Richter, *A Companion to Literary Theory* (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2018).

³ Richter.

⁴ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 2016).

and engage in constructive activities.⁵

Based on these perspectives, trauma theology can be defined as a constructive theological methodology—one that engages with social realities by interpreting theological meaning through the lens of human suffering and psychological distress. It provides a framework for theologizing based on lived experiences, seeking to contribute theological solutions to the crises and symptoms of trauma that pervade society. Trauma theology, therefore, represents a theological consciousness that calls for active engagement in responding to and addressing traumatic realities that affect individuals universally, at any time and in any place. More specifically, it provides a theological response to trauma inflicted by religiously motivated violence, which has left deep scars on the social and spiritual fabric of Indonesian society.

Violence in the Name of Religion a Source of Trauma in Indonesia

Over the past decade, Indonesia has witnessed a significant rise in religiously motivated violence, making it a region where such incidents frequently occur. Cornelis Lay documents various cases of violence carried out in the name of religion that have taken place across the country. In September 2002, residents of Pemokong Village, Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), attacked members of the Ahmadiyya community. Similarly, in June 2003, in Pancor Village, Lombok, NTB, 23 Ahmadiyya families were forcibly evicted by local residents. In September 2005, two Ahmadiyya mosques in Manior Village, Kuningan, West Java, were burned down, forcing hundreds of Ahmadiyya followers to flee. In May 2006, in

Purwakarta, West Jakarta, several Islamic mass organizations—including the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), the Indonesian Mujahidin Council (MMI), the Islamic People's Forum (FUI), and Hizburt Tahrir Indonesia (HTI)—carried out a campaign to suppress inter-ethnic and interfaith dialogue initiated by then-President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur).

Religious violence has also manifested in large-scale communal conflicts. On December 26, 1996, riots in Tasikmalaya resulted in the destruction of churches, 18 police stations, three hotels, six banks, eight factories, seven supermarkets, and 89 Chinese-owned shops and restaurants. In April 2004, mosques were vandalized in Kupang and Talake, Ambon. Similarly, between 1999 and 2001, sectarian conflicts between Muslims and Christians in Ambon and Poso led to the deaths of nearly 200 people, the burning of houses of worship, and the destruction of residential and public infrastructure.

According to Cornelis Lay, violence in the name of religion is often exploited for political purposes. He cites examples where state actors have used religious rhetoric to justify actions. In Depok, for instance, M. Triono, the chairman of Commission A of the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD), enforced regional regulations (Perda) to support the FPI's rejection of hotels suspected of harboring prostitution. In December 2005, the Indonesian government, through law enforcement agencies, declared Lia Aminuddin and the Eden sect heretical, charging them with blasphemy.

Religious violence has also been perpetrated by civil society groups against fellow citizens. In May 2006, the FPI carried out violent raids under the pretext of enforcing Islamic law (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*), targeting businesses they accused of promoting prostitution. In April 2006, the same group launched an attack on the offices of *Playboy* magazine, demonstrating

⁵ Stephanie N. Arel and Shelly Rambo, *Post-Traumatic Public Theology, Post-Traumatic Public Theology* (Springer International Publishing, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-40660-2>.

against its publication by throwing stones at the building, causing significant damage. Cornelis Lay interprets such acts of religious violence as political maneuvers, where religion is instrumentalized as a tool for legitimacy and public mobilization. This pattern suggests that religion has the potential to be co-opted for political gain, serving as a justification for radical and violent ideologies.⁶

Jan further examines religious violence during the New Order period, documenting numerous incidents. In June 1996, in Sidotopo, Surabaya, a group claiming to represent an Islamic movement attacked a church during worship, throwing stones, damaging ten churches, and engaging in robbery and sexual violence.⁷ In January 1997, a Chinese citizen, Kim Tjai (also known as Candra Dinata), in Rengasdengklok, Warungdoyong Village, filed a complaint against a group of Muslim youths who had been beating the mosque drum loudly during Ramadan. In response, thousands of people carried out violent reprisals, attacking Kim's home, burning vehicles, buildings, five church buildings, two temples, and a Chinese school.

In May 1997, a Golkar political party rally in Banjarmasin escalated into religiously motivated violence, leading to the destruction of churches, Christian schools, Buddhist temples, and Mitra Plaza.⁸ The riots resulted in numerous fatalities, sexual assaults, and widespread looting. In November 1998, a violent confrontation between mosque youth and parking attendants in Ketapang, West Jakarta, escalated into large-scale attacks.⁹ The rumor that a mosque had been burned by non-Muslims led to mass retaliation, in

which 22 churches and three schools were burned. In response, in November 1998, riots in Kupang erupted as a form of revenge, with Christian groups attacking mosques, a Hajj dormitory, shops, and Muslim homes, forcing thousands of Muslim residents to flee.¹⁰

Between December 1996 and January 1997, ethnic conflicts in Sambas, West Kalimantan, between the Dayak and Madurese communities led to mass violence. By 2001, similar ethnic tensions in Sampit, Central Kalimantan, between the Dayak, Malay, and Madurese populations escalated into a religious conflict, as the Dayak were primarily identified as Christians and the Malay-Madurese as Muslims. The introduction of religious symbols into the conflict exacerbated violence, leading to extensive casualties, destruction of houses of worship, and damage to public facilities.

Religious violence in Indonesia has also involved acts of terrorism. In December 2004, coordinated bomb attacks targeted churches during Christmas celebrations in cities such as Sukabumi, Mojokerto, Bandung, Pekanbaru, Batam, and Mataram, Lombok.¹¹ These attacks, allegedly carried out in retaliation for previous sectarian conflicts in Poso, Maluku, and Kalimantan, resulted in 15 deaths and widespread destruction. The perpetrators were believed to be members of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), an Islamist extremist group linked to Al-Qaeda. In ¹² October 2002, a bombing at the Sari Club in Legian, Kuta, Bali, killed dozens of people, mostly foreign tourists. Indonesian authorities later arrested members of Jemaah Islamiyah, including Abu Bakar Baasyir, Imam Samudra, Amrozi, Muchlas, and Ali Imron, who were convicted of orchestrating the attack.¹³

⁶ Cornelis Lay, "Kekerasan Atas Nama Agama: Perspektif Politik," n.d.

⁷ Jan S Aritonang, *Sejarah Perjumpaan Kristen Dan Islam Di Indonesia* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2004).

⁸ Aritonang.

⁹ Aritonang.

¹⁰ Aritonang.

¹¹ Aritonang.

¹² Aritonang.

¹³ Aritonang.

Based on these events, it is evident that religion can become a source of both personal and communal trauma, particularly when it is manipulated for political ends. Religious violence not only inflicts physical harm but also leaves lasting psychological wounds, as individuals and communities struggle with the haunting memories of such atrocities. These traumatic experiences contribute to growing skepticism toward religion, reinforcing the perception that it is a source of conflict rather than a force for peace.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for theological reconstruction to revitalize the fundamental role of religion as an entity that promotes order, peace, healing, and reconciliation. If the politicization of religion continues to be left unaddressed, public trust in religious institutions will erode further, pushing Indonesian society toward secularism and atheism. The widespread trauma caused by religiously motivated violence necessitates a critical theological response—one that reaffirms religion's true purpose as a means of fostering unity, compassion, and social harmony.¹⁴

The Essence of Religion as Restoration and Reconciliation

Etymologically, the term “religion” is derived from Sanskrit, where *a* means “not” and *gama* means “chaotic,” signifying that the fundamental purpose of religion is to prevent disorder in human life. Scholars such as Taylor define religion as a manifestation of spirituality—an engagement with a sacred or divine entity that inspires reverence and obedience. Similarly, Frazer characterizes religion as the worship of a higher power, one that is believed to govern and regulate the workings of the universe. Durkheim further posits that

religion belongs to the supernatural realm, which transcends human understanding and cannot be fully comprehended by reason, suggesting that religious knowledge is distinct from empirical human cognition.¹⁵

From a sociological perspective, O'Dea views religion as a mechanism for human adaptation, facilitating an individual's integration into both macro and microcosmic realities. As religion encompasses supernatural experiences, it serves as a stabilizing force that provides a sense of security through rituals and moral prescriptions, shaping an individual's relationship with both fellow human beings and the external world.¹⁶ In this regard, religion functions as a social system oriented toward non-empirical forces that are believed to ensure both personal and communal well-being.¹⁷ Clifford Geertz extends this notion by asserting that religion and culture are intertwined as systems of meaning. Through religious values, individuals—both personally and communally—interpret their experiences, regulate their behavior, and construct moral frameworks that define their understanding of the world.¹⁸

Based on these definitions, it is evident that the intrinsic nature of religion is to establish order in human life, guiding individuals in their interactions with both the transcendent (God) and the immanent (macro and microcosmic realities). Religion, by its very nature, is fundamentally associated with practices that uphold sacredness, holiness, and moral greatness. Consequently, it is illogical to claim that religion inherently fosters violence, as its primary function is to lead humanity

¹⁴ Martino Sardi, *“Membangun Hidup Beragama Yang Beradab Demi Damai Yang Berkesinambungan,”* Moch. Nur (Yogyakarta: CR-Peace UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2012). 3-26.

¹⁵ Amsal Bakhtiar, *Filsafat Agama: Wisata Pemikiran Dan Kepercayaan Manusia* (Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2007).

¹⁶ Thomas F O'Dea, *Sosiologi Agama: Suatu Pengenalan Awal* (Jakarta: CV. Rajawali, 1985).

¹⁷ O'Dea.

¹⁸ Clifford Geertz, *Kebudayaan Dan Agama* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1993).

toward harmony and moral elevation. However, in contemporary contexts, religion appears to have become paradoxical. While its fundamental purpose is to promote order, peace, and stability, it is increasingly being instrumentalized as a means of legitimizing acts of violence, ultimately contributing to trauma in human society.¹⁹

Hugh Miall said that religion today has become relative, a force that can unite as well as a force that can cause acute and massive disintegration. Religion as a legitimization of violent practices, is a politicized religion, when religion is used as a tool to dominate, gain recognition and monopolize.²⁰ In this case, the author understands that: Violence in the name of religion certainly causes the deprivation of human life necessities, or often referred to as basic rights to life or human rights.

Additionally, religiously motivated violence exacerbates social inequalities, deepening the divide between majority and minority religious groups. The broader implication of this phenomenon is the erosion of religious morality and the decline of human integrity in social life. Pantaleon's *three vicious triangles* theory posits that when three interconnected elements are present, they generate continuous cycles of conflict—either overt or covert—on both vertical and horizontal levels. These three interrelated elements are: (1) religion, morality, and humanity; (2) politics, economy, and society; and (3) ignorance, poverty, and disease.²¹ According to this framework, religion itself is not inherently violent, but it becomes a vehicle for violence when it is stripped of its essence and co-opted by

external forces.

Marsana Windhu similarly contends that religious violence should not be viewed in isolation but rather as a product of its interaction with various socio-political and economic factors. These external influences exploit religion as a tool of legitimacy to create instability, disorder, and disharmony within societies.²² Kutz and Turpin further emphasize that religious violence is linked to broader structural networks of power, individual psychological predispositions, biological impulses, and socio-cultural upheavals. The interplay of these elements across macro and micro levels within social hierarchies ultimately fosters conditions conducive to religiously motivated violence.²³

Camara's *spiral of violence* theory suggests that social inequality serves as the initial catalyst for violent escalation. When injustice in the distribution of resources and opportunities becomes pervasive, marginalized groups are compelled to resist—whether on a personal, institutional, or structural level. To amplify and expand such resistance, individuals and groups often resort to using identity-based rhetoric, employing religious, ethnic, linguistic, or cultural distinctions as rallying points for collective mobilization.²⁴

If religiously motivated violence is not properly addressed, it risks generating widespread distrust toward religion itself. The increasing prevalence of such violence has led to sharp critiques, with religion often being perceived as dangerous and even as a greater force for harm than for good. Some claim that religion is the root of all evil, arguing that its doctrines contain inherent elements of violence. Atheists

¹⁹ Zia Ullah Khan, "Role of Inter-Religious Harmony in Peaceful Society," n.d., <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202311.0473.v1>.

²⁰ Hugh Miall, Oliver Ramsbotham, and Tom Woodhouse, *Resolusi Damai Konflik Kontemporer* (Jakarta: PT. RajaGrafindo Persada, 2002).

²¹ Pantaleon Iroegbu, "Ethnicism and Religion in Conflict," n.d.

²² I Marsana Windhu, *Kekuasaan Dan Kekerasan Menurut Johan Galtung* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1992).

²³ Thomas Santoso, *Teori-Teori Kekerasan* (Jakarta: Ghalia Indonesia, 2002).

²⁴ Dom Helder Camara, *Spiral Kekerasan* (Yogyakarta: Insist Press dan Pustaka Pelajar, 2000).

have further asserted that humanity would be better off without religion altogether.²⁵

John Ackermann similarly observes that religious doctrinal systems often stand in epistemological tension with human social life. Secularists argue that religion is merely a human construct—an illusion created to justify individuals' inability to fully achieve their existential needs. Religion is also accused of instilling fear by imposing doctrines of divine punishment, particularly through the concept of hell, thereby making earthly existence burdensome rather than fulfilling. Additionally, religion is seen as highly susceptible to manipulation by various political and social interests, leading to contradictions and conflicts within society.

Karl Marx's critique of religion follows a similar trajectory. He argues that religion sanctifies suffering and thus perpetuates oppression, particularly within the framework of capitalist economies. By presenting suffering as divinely ordained, religion discourages individuals from challenging systemic injustice. Marx rejected the religious notion that human existence is inherently sinful or evil, asserting instead that the true source of social injustice lies not in human nature but in the flawed structures of political and economic systems. For Marx, the solution to such problems is not found in religion but in structural and material transformations. He further contended that religion functions as a means of social pacification, discouraging activism and leading individuals toward conservatism and passive resignation. Consequently, many secular scholars view religion as inherently opposed to scientific inquiry and progress.²⁶

It is undeniable that the history of

religion has been marked by violence and bloodshed, often justified through theological doctrines that frame violent struggle as divinely sanctioned. However, as Girani, cited by Lebefure, argues, violence is not intrinsic to human nature; rather, it emerges through an unconscious process of imitation (*mimetic rivalry*), wherein individuals replicate violent behaviors they have learned from others.²⁷ This suggests that religious violence is not an inevitable outcome of religious belief but a sociological phenomenon shaped by external influences.

From this perspective, the fundamental purpose of religion is not conflict but restoration and reconciliation. However, external factors—such as economic disparities, social inequalities, cultural tensions, and political agendas—have often distorted and diminished the true essence of religion. When religion is co-opted by these external forces, it risks being exploited as a tool for legitimizing violence. Thus, the use of religious symbols to justify violent actions ultimately discredits and marginalizes the very essence of religion itself.

To counteract this distortion, theological efforts are required to revitalize and restore the authentic nature of religion. This necessitates a process of purification—reaffirming the foundational principles of religious traditions and safeguarding them from political and ideological exploitation. By doing so, religion can reclaim its role as a force for peace, ethical guidance, and human dignity, rather than being manipulated as a justification for violence.²⁸

²⁵ Keith Ward, *Benarkah Agama Berbahaya* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2009).

²⁶ Robert John Ackermann, *Agama Sebagai Kritik: Analisis Eksistensi Agama-Agama Besar* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1997).

²⁷ C.S. Rappan Paledung, Nindyo Sasongko, and Indah Sriulina, *Misiologi Kontemporer: Merentangkan Horison Panggilan Kristen* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2019).

²⁸ Atalia Omer, "Religion and the Study of Peace: Practice without Reflection," *Religions MDPI* No.12 (2021): 1069, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12121069>.

Revitalizing Religion as Recovery: Minimizing Life Trauma

From the author's perspective, if someone is still constrained by traumatic symptoms, it will affect their ability to interpret the meaning in every event of their life; trauma causes disturbances in humans to give meaning to their lives. In this case, religion should be present and appear as a recovery, helping humans to give meaning to the phenomena of their lives. Because in truth, religion is not only a matter of doctrinal formulations and traditions, but religion is also a matter of human experience in their daily lives in giving meaning to their relationship with transcendent entities, the macro and micro cosmos.

Septemmy Lakawa said that traumatic phenomena are an integral part of the process and dynamics of human life, a phenomenon that is undeniable in the midst of our human life process. Therefore, a new theological methodology is needed, namely theology in the language of wounds. Lakawa highlighted the phenomenon of human trafficking that is rampant in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), which is related to the mission of Christianity. How should human mental wounds or trauma be responded to theologically, so that the mission of Christianity is not just Christianization but also care, healing and recovery of mental wounds? In other words, the mission of religion should not be carried out in a spirit of colonialism, anti-cultural, but also based on humanity. How should the mission of religions also be rooted in facing global challenges as a common struggle of humanity? Trauma theology makes the church aware of the importance of an Eclectic pastoral care of human mental wounds, where traumatic reality is a gap for theology, when trauma is used as text for theology. In the oldest case, trauma is understood as a suffering or pain inflicted on the body. Still, along with

the development of psychology by Sigmund Freud in psychoanalysis, it turns out that trauma is also related to memory and the mind (psyche). Trauma theology makes religion have to provide space to listen to the cries of the wounded, because suffering and trauma have different grammatical meanings. If suffering is only related to external wounds or pain, then trauma is more comprehensive, concerning wounds or pain in the body, mind and soul of humans.²⁹

In the author's opinion, through the methodology of trauma theology, every religion, when reading and interpreting its sacred texts, doctrines, and traditions, should be directed to reconcile, heal, and restore human inner wounds. Trauma or inner wounds are truly a global problem, where everyone at time and from all nations, languages, and genders, and across all ages, can experience trauma. Therefore, religions must respond to this, how religion plays a role as a filter to minimize violent practices, colonization, and all forms of actions that can cause inner wounds (trauma), and religion, through its doctrines and traditions, formulates teachings, advice, and counsel that heal and restore trauma. Barker said that religion should not be used as a scapegoat for behavior that causes trauma, or religion should be used as a legitimizing tool to perpetuate behaviors that cause human inner wounds. As if believing in God, following God, causes someone to be hurt, persecuted or die for God. According to Barker, Religion should transform life from being wounded to recovering, not the other way around, religion seems to be identified with experiencing suffering from mental

²⁹ Paledung, Sasongko, and Sriulina, *Misiologi Kontemporer: Merentangkan Horison Panggilan Kristen*.

wounds (traumatic).³⁰ In this case, according to the author, religion should be present as an anticipatory form in the midst of the rampant practice of crime and violence that causes wounds or trauma. In the author's opinion, trauma is a psychological symptom and religion itself is present for things related to the human psyche, rather than things related to the logic of human rationality.

Norman Wright stated that the context of human life is a crisis, namely a critical or urgent situation. Something that is a crisis is caused by an external danger that is a threat, which can stimulate it to its peak or climax. Crisis also explains a context of life that is unbalanced, because it experiences extreme events, and the meaning of this crisis is often analogized in the diction of trauma, stress and so on. A crisis occurs when an extreme event occurs, while the person is not ready to face the event, resulting in someone having difficulty coping with the situation. According to Wright, a crisis situation should be approached with a counseling methodology, either psychological or religious (pastoral). And the crisis can be overcome by creating constructive relationships and interactions with the people around them, such as friends, and family. Wright also explained that people who fall into a crisis situation usually need to be heard, because in that way the traumatic victim explores their desire to be protected, helped and controlled, filling their inner emptiness through the presence and counseling conversation. Through this action, the counselor can transform the client into a phase of self-development and self-reconciliation.³¹ In the author's opinion, in facing the traumatic reality of

human beings, religions should be present in the public sphere not as a political, social and cultural institutional denominational force, but how religion is present in the context of public life in the face of counseling, the face of opening a dialogue of counseling conversations and the face of being present and hearing the screams and voices of those who experience wounds (trauma), to be able to transform religious communities in Indonesia from a traumatic phase to a phase of recovery and reconciliation.

In addition, the fact that violence in the name of religion is rampant in Indonesia, which has claimed many lives and caused great material losses, should make us aware of how important religious tolerance is in minimizing human trauma, how religion should be read, and interpreted in a dialogue of religious tolerance, rather than religious sentiment. The tolerance in question is the awareness to respect each other among fellow human beings according to the teachings of religions. Hacking the values of brotherhood in religion and discarding radical, fundamental and exclusive readings of religion.³² The need for a healthy interpretation of the reality of religious plurality, where plurality is not interpreted as religious sentiment but rather a space to compete with each other and show the nobility of the values of their respective religious virtues. Therefore, fundamental readings of religion need to be criticized, because religions also have a moral and social responsibility to create peace in society.³³

YB Sudarmanto describes the role of religion in the crisis of life as actually laying the foundation of

³⁰ Paul A Barker, *Tackling Trauma: Global, Biblical, and Pastoral Perspectives* (Langham Global Library, 2019).

³¹ H. Norman Wright, *Konseling Krisis: Membantu Orang Dalam Krisis Dan Stress* (Jawa Timur: Gandum Mas, 1999).

³² Maksimus Regus, "Interreligious Conflicts in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia:," *Jurnal Politik* vol.5, no. no.2 (2020): 1-22., <https://doi.org/10.7454/jp.v5i2.1013>.

³³ Muhammad Sofyan, *Agama Dan Kekerasan: Dalam Bingkai Reformasi* (Yogyakarta: Media Pressindo, 1999).

morality for society, where morality is the filtering of society in the dynamics of changing times from industrialization to globalization, which has the potential to cause injury to human dignity. How to make religious morality a presentation of human rights values and the environment.³⁴ Mery Kolimon mentions in an effort to find healing in the wounds of humanity in NTT, where the injury of the human soul means the injury of the body of Christ. Theology in the context of trauma is an effort to fight against dehumanization practices that hurt human dignity, and how church services become advocates for those victims of trauma. The church becomes a voice that represents God to oppose and fight all forms of slavery, the church becomes public education about human rights, the church becomes norms to fight all forms of greed. Through trauma theology, it must also transform the church's mission from being institutionally denominational to a mission for the marginalized.³⁵

Religions may differ in their doctrines and interpretations, but in truth religion exists for humanity; in this case the religious values that heal wounds are the teachings of love. A religion with a loving face will emphasize morality, because in truth religions believe that human life belongs to and comes from God Almighty (TYME). Therefore, religion should run in an orientation to fulfill the call of TYME, namely by doing good and creating a clean inner atmosphere. Through the values of love, virtue and a clean inner atmosphere, religion should penetrate all elements and aspects of human

life.³⁶ TB Simatupang also said that this century there has been a crisis of the universe and a crisis of humanity, and the crisis in question is a disturbance to humanity, a disturbance to ecology, politics, economy, social and culture. In fact, every human being faces and experiences this crisis together, which should make everyone aware to also face and overcome this crisis together. How religions are present to show their responsibility for the future of life together with humanity.³⁷ After the bitter experience of religion recorded by history, it became the basis for secularists to want to get rid of religion in the life of society. In truth, religion has many values of goodness, virtue and nobility, all of which are obscured by political interests that piggyback on religion. That is why the noble values and virtues of religion must be revitalized, and serve as the ethical foundation of religion in overcoming violence. This religious ethic is what is expected to be attempted to reduce violence, therefore religion also needs to reconstruct its paradigm from a normative one (legitimate or illegitimate) to an ethical way of thinking, namely fighting violence without violent means.³⁸ In this case Olaf H Schuman explained that religion is not identical to violence but religion can potentially be used to legitimize violence, therefore for Schuman religion that contains violence is human religion, not religion that comes from God. Religion truly exists for peace, because that is the true function of religion to voice reconciliation for those who are in conflict and traumatized. Therefore, it

³⁴ YB. Sudarmanto, *Agama Dan Politik Antikekerasan* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1989).

³⁵ Mery Kolimon et al., *Menolak Diam: Gereja Melawan Perdagangan Orang* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2018).

³⁶ Einar M. Sitompul, *Agama-Agama Dan Problematika Sosial Keagamaan* (Jakarta: Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan PGI dan Misi, 2005).

³⁷ TB. Simatupang, *Kehadiran Kristen Dalam Perang, Revolusi Dan Pembangunan* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1986).

³⁸ Wim Beuken and Karl-Josef Kuschel, *Agama Sebagai Sumber Kekerasan* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2003).

must be emphasized that religion exists to organize the lives of society constructively, religion is not a tool for legitimizing political rulers. In fact, religion should be a political critique of the government that ignores humanitarian insight in the life of humanity together, but a religion that has lost its essence will be vulnerable to falling into politicization and projecting religion with a violent face.³⁹

According to Yusak Setiawan in the phenomenon of religious conflict, it is actually the humans who are in conflict, not the religion. And the religion that is vulnerable to falling into conflict is a religion that identifies itself as an institutional organization rather than a spiritual movement. Because the essence of the entity of religion is the aspect of faith that permeates the norms of human behavior with each other, humans with ecology and humans with God. If we start from the essence of the entity of religion, it is impossible for religion to become a source of conflict.⁴⁰ Therefore, it is necessary for Indonesian society to reach a level of religious maturity, which is marked by the constructive development of morality, integrity, conscience, behavior and thought patterns. Religious maturity will form the idea that religion exists for the sake of glorifying God, not for glorifying religion itself. So that religious maturity will transform the orientation of religion from being privatized, namely centered on one's own interests, to being for the common or public interest.⁴¹ Revitalizing religion as a recovery is a religion that is

present as reconciliation.⁴² And the spirit of reconciliation of religions can arise when religions find God's mercy that arises within each of them. In this perspective, the phenomenon of violence in the name of religion should be interpreted as a divine call to reconcile, not a competition of religious sentiments.⁴³ Extreme traumatic experiences should be interpreted to create the courage to open oneself towards reconciliation, only through actions like this can acts of violence be minimized. Therefore, religions should be a source of the spirit of reconciliation, present to accompany and listen to those who are victims and perpetrators of violence. Through dialogue like this, the spirit of reconciliation can be transmitted to the victims or perpetrators of the violence.⁴⁴

Julianus Mojau calls it liberative solidarity, because the destruction of human values is a blasphemy against God. In this awareness, the role of religion is needed as a divine means of presenting liberative solidarity, namely creating human relations and interactions in the principle of family, a solidarity that frees humans from oppression, stupidity and violence. How the church through liberative solidarity, the church is present for those who are victims of violence (trauma) or marginalized or common people who are often victims of injustice and cause psychological shock (trauma). Through this liberative solidarity, the church is

³⁹ Olaf H. Schufmann, *Agama-Agama Kekerasan Dan Perdamaian* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2011).

⁴⁰ Yusak B Setiawan et al., *Perdamaian Dan Keadilan: Dalam Konteks Indonesia Yang Multikultural Dan Beragam Tradisi Iman* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2017).

⁴¹ Setiawan et al.

⁴² Ahmad Salehudin, "Understanding Religious Violence In Indonesia: Theological, Structural And Cultural Analyses," *Journal of Islam* vol.6, no. no.2, (2012): 305-22, <https://jiis.uinsby.ac.id/index.php/JIIs/article/view/111/110>.

⁴³ Agus Rachmat Widyanto, "Interreligious Conflict and Reconciliation in Indonesia," in *Religion, Conflict and Reconciliation: Multifaith Ideals and Realities*, ed. dkk Jerald D. Gort (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), 197-215.

⁴⁴ O.E.Ch. Wuwungan, *Kebersamaan Hidup* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 2004).

present and embraces those who are discredited and exploited. Therefore, religion must stop reading sacred texts in a particularistic normative perspective, but religion transforms reading its sacred texts for a reconciliatory liberative spirit.⁴⁵

CONCLUSION

Based on the preceding discussion, it can be concluded that religion, in its true essence, is not inherently violent; rather, instances of violence associated with religion often stem from human interests that have been sacralized through religious symbols and language. The fundamental nature of religion is to establish order, uphold moral excellence, embody sacredness, and reflect divine greatness, all of which are oriented toward the mystical values of the God. Acts of violence committed in the name of religion do not indicate that religion itself is inherently evil or a source of wrongdoing; rather highlight the susceptibility of religion adherents to being drawn into criminal activities, violence, and conflict. In reality, religion is meant to serve as a force for solidarity and reconciliation, values that have often been overshadowed and overlooked in public attention. Within the contemporary context, there is an urgent need for religion to revitalize its intrinsic moral and spiritual values and to engage in constructive theology—one that meaningfully interprets the existential struggles of human life within the framework of everyday experiences.

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⁴⁵ Julianus Mojau, *Meniadakan Atau Merangkul?: Pergulatan Teologi Protestan Dengan Islam Politik Di Indonesia* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2012).

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