

## UNRAVELING THE PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS ON RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE

**Muhtadi Abdul Mun'im**

Universitas Al-Amien Preduan

Email: [muhtadi@gmail.com](mailto:muhtadi@gmail.com)

### **Abstrak**

Kekerasan beragama telah menjadi masalah yang berulang sepanjang sejarah, membangkitkan emosi yang mendalam dan menimbulkan pertanyaan mendalam mengenai hakikat iman, kemanusiaan, dan konflik. Dalam artikel ini, penulis memulai analisis filosofis untuk mengungkap dinamika yang kompleks dibalik fenomena kekerasan beragama, terutama dinamika makna dalam berbagai konteks, penyebabnya, dan justifikasi moral. Artikel ini menggunakan analisis konseptual sebagai metode yang melibatkan pengujian dan klarifikasi konsep-konsep kunci terkait kekerasan beragama. Artikel ini mengkaji bagaimana individu dan kelompok menggunakan keyakinan agama untuk membenarkan kekerasan dan mengkaji berbagai studi kasus dari tradisi agama yang berbeda, termasuk Kristen, Yudaisme, dan Islam. Artikel ini memberikan wawasan mengenai motivasi dan ideologi yang mendasari tindakan kekerasan yang dilakukan atas nama Tuhan. Penelitian ini memberikan landasan untuk mengembangkan strategi untuk melawan dan mendorong hidup berdampingan secara damai di masyarakat yang beragam.

**Kata Kunci:** Agama, kekerasan, perdamaian, resolusi konflik

### **Abstract**

Religious violence has been a recurring issue throughout history, evoking deep emotions and raising profound questions about the nature of faith, humanity, and conflict. In this article, we embark on a philosophical analysis to unravel the complex dynamics behind religious violence, especially on the meaning dynamics among various contexts, its causes, and moral justification. This article uses conceptual analysis as the method which involves examining and clarifying the key concepts related to religious violence. It examines how individuals and groups use religious beliefs to justify violence and examines various case studies from different religious traditions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. It provides insights into the motivations and ideologies that underlie acts of violence perpetrated in the name of God. This research provides a foundation for developing strategies to counteract and promote peaceful coexistence in diverse societies.

**Keywords:** religion, violence, peace, conflict resolution,

### **INTRODUCTION**

There are many phenomena of violence that were committed by adherents of every faith on the grounds of serving the cause of God. Numerous conflicts in different part of the world indicate that adherents of all the major world faiths justified violence on the grounds that their cause is righteous. All of them hold in common the belief that those who die defending their faith will be immortalized and given God's salvation. Violent ideas and images are not the domination of any single religion. In many areas of the world, Hindus, Buddhist, Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Sikhs justify the use of violence on the grounds that they are protecting their religious identity and interests.

Since several decades from now, there were many cases that labeled as religious violence. Mark Juergensmeyer writes an investigation on cultures of violence of the major world faiths on his book "Terror in the Mind of God". He found adherents of world's major religions support force of violence. For example, Christians in America who supported abortion clinic bombing and

militia actions such as the bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building <sup>1</sup>. The bombing of the WTC in New York City on 1993 and 2001 associated with Muslims; the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the attack in Hebron's Tomb of the Patriarch were supported by Jews. In Eastern countries Sikhs identified with the killing of India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Punjab's chief minister Beant Singh. The nerve gas attack in Tokyo's subways was connected with the Japanese Buddhists affiliation<sup>2</sup>We also connected the conflict in Ambon, North Maluku and the others area in Indonesia with religious conflict. Bombing in Bali (2002) is associated with religious terrorists' network in Northeast Asia.

The fact as shown above demonstrates that religion has indeed played a significant role in contributing violent behavior. Religion made it prone to intolerance and violence. Religion is often called on to justify human violence with reference to sacred texts, divine mission, or moral purposes. Scriptures was filled with stories in which a violent God approved of war. Of course, violence legitimating texts do not lead automatically to actual violence. They do make violence more likely in the midst of conflict in which antagonistic parties count religious differences among issues that divide them. Nelson-Pallmeyer argues that the problem is actual violence at the heart of these texts that can reasonably cited by people to justify their own recourse to violence<sup>3</sup>.

He convinces us that the problem is not primarily that people take passages out of context and twist them in order to justify violence.

---

<sup>1</sup> Juergensmeyer, Mark. 2001. *Terror in the Mind of God the Global Rise of Religious Violence*, (London: University of California Press)

<sup>2</sup> Armstrong, Karen. 2001. *Berperang Demi Tuhan: Fundamentalisme dalam Islam, Kristen, dan Yahudi*, (Jakarta: Serambi & Mizan)

<sup>3</sup> Nelson-Pallmeyer, Jack. 2003. *Is Religion Killing Us? Violence in the Bible and the Quran* (New York: Trinity Press International)

Some scholars assume that faith-based violence phenomena related to religious fundamentalism. Although many religious fundamentalist movements do not take coercive force, religious violence is seen as horrible expressions of fundamentalists<sup>4</sup>. Some others claim that religion is not to blame for the conflicts that increasingly threaten world peace. People rarely kill each other for reasons of religious difference alone. They do frequently use God and religion to justify killing when conflicts escalate between individuals, groups, or nations. The problems were often rooted in land, oppression, discrimination, or any number of other historical grievances.

For many believers, religion is good, necessary and at the heart of life because it dealt with issues of ultimate consequence and meaning. We may say that religion is not the root of the problem. People find reasons and justifications to kill one another and to rob, steal and everything else. Even if all religions are removed from the world, it will still have people killing each other. The Soviet Union or China is known as an atheist state. It killed millions based on a secular religion of communism. That is just one example. Some people will not agree with the statement that religion was the real motivation behind those incidents.

Some studies provide insights into the relationship between religion, violence, and peace. Gopin 1997 argues that the study of religion and conflict resolution is important and suggests various topics to be addressed in this field. Haar 2005 explores different religious perspectives on conflict and peace, highlighting the potential of religion as both a source of conflict and a resource for peace. Gopin 2000 critiques current secular and religious approaches to conflict and peace, emphasizing the need for new paradigms of religious

---

<sup>4</sup> Armstrong, Karen. 2001. *Berperang Demi Tuhan: Fundamentalisme dalam Islam, Kristen, dan Yahudi*, (Jakarta: Serambi & Mizan)

peacemaking. Humanity has always been preoccupied with the search for peace and happiness. Many people turn to and rely on religion to provide them with a means of understanding the human condition and as a methodology of how to find peace within themselves and work towards the creation of peace on earth. Religions however, while providing many valuable tools for peacebuilding, can also contribute to perpetuating cultures of violence<sup>5</sup>

The other papers present a mixed perspective on whether religion causes violence or peace. Alger (2002) and Silberman (2005) argue that religion can be a force for peace, emphasizing its potential to inspire positive change and discourage violence. However, Deitch (2020) suggests that religious conflicts tend to last longer, although religion itself does not have a strong influence on conflict termination or the level of violence. Appelby (1999), in “The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation”, asserts that religion's ability to inspire violence is intimately related to its equally impressive power as a force for peace. He identifies what religious terrorists and religious peacemakers share in common, what causes them to take different paths in fighting injustice and the importance of acquiring understanding of religious extremism. Overall, the studies highlight the complex relationship between religion and violence or peace, with some emphasizing its potential for both positive and negative outcomes.

In recent years, a burgeoning literature has emerged on the relationship between religion and conflict. Contradictory theories address the dynamics and termination of religious violent conflicts. Some studies focus on the destructive role of religion, arguing that religious conflicts are longer, more violent, and intractable. Others argue that religion has an ambivalent role, both

---

<sup>5</sup> Hendry, Eka. 2003. *Monopoli Tafsir Kebenaran: Wacana Keagamaan Kritis dan Kekerasan Kemanusiaan*, (Pontianak: Kalimantan Persada Press)

destructive and constructive, and recognize religion as a force for peacebuilding.

We cannot deny that many mass riots, conflicts, and other types of violence have correlation with religion. Religious violence has plagued societies throughout history, leaving a trail of destruction and despair in its wake. To gain a deeper understanding of this complex issue, researchers have delved into the philosophical analysis of religious violence. This exploration seeks to unravel the underlying causes, motivations, and moral implications of violence committed in the name of religion. Through a multidisciplinary approach, scholars have shed light on the intricate relationship between religion, violence, and human nature. Some important questions relating to it are: what does it mean by religious violence? How have this violence had theological justification? What kind of violence that often used religion as its base? How can we differentiate religious violence from other types of violence? This article presents a novel perspective derived from recent research in the field. This article focuses on the philosophical analysis on religious violence, especially on the meaning dynamics among various context, its causes, and moral justification.

The philosophical analysis of religious violence offers valuable insights into the complex and multifaceted nature of this phenomenon. By examining the paradoxical nature of faith, the role of identity, the moral justifications, and the power dynamics surrounding religious violence, researchers can contribute to a deeper understanding of this pressing issue. This research provides a foundation for developing strategies to counteract religious violence, foster interfaith dialogue, and promote peaceful coexistence in diverse societies.

By unraveling the philosophical analysis on religious violence, we

hope to contribute to a deeper understanding of this complex issue. Through critical examination, historical context, and empathetic exploration, we can challenge prevailing narratives and work towards a more peaceful and inclusive world, where religion becomes a unifying force rather than a source of division and violence.

## **METHODS**

Religious violence has been a recurring issue throughout history, evoking deep emotions and raising profound questions about the nature of faith, humanity, and conflict. In this article, we embark on a philosophical analysis to unravel the complex dynamics behind religious violence. By delving into the underlying causes, examining historical contexts, and exploring various philosophical perspectives, we aim to shed light on this perplexing phenomenon. Our approach combines critical thinking, empathy, and a desire to foster understanding and peace amidst religious diversity. This article uses conceptual analysis as the method which involves examining and clarifying the key concepts related to religious violence. It focuses on defining terms, exploring their meanings, and analyzing the underlying assumptions and implications.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This article helps uncover the underlying dynamics meaning, beliefs, ideologies, and philosophical frameworks that contribute to religious violence. It reveals how certain religious interpretations or philosophical doctrines can be misused or distorted to justify violence. This understanding can contribute to efforts aimed at addressing and preventing religious violence. In order to discuss important issues on this subject, this article begin with the investigation on the meaning of violence.

## **A. The Meaning of Religious Violence**

It seems to me a paradox when people perceive religion as good and peace, but then the historical records of religion shows many bloody incidents along its path. It is not easy to define violence as acceptable definition for everyone. The meaning of violence is a cultural construct varying in meaning from place to place. For example, in Western countries the concept of rape nowadays includes forced sexual intercourse within a marital relationship. In Indonesia, rape is defined as ‘forced to have intercourse outside their marriages<sup>6</sup>.

There are several dictionary definitions that can be taken into account such as ‘swift and intense force’, ‘the use of physical force to injure somebody or damage something’, ‘unjust or unwarranted exertion of force especially against the rights of others’, ‘physical attack of another person’, ‘the illegal use of unjustified force, or the effect created by the threat of this’ and finally ‘behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something’. De Vries points out the concept of violence as both empirical and transcendental or metaphysical. According to him, violence entails any cause, any justified or illegitimate force that is exerted – physically or otherwise – by one thing (event or instance, group or person, and perhaps, word and object) on another<sup>7</sup>.

### **1. The Roots of Violence**

I think it is better to know approaches about the root of violence which generally seen by two narratives: violence is inherently a human nature; and

---

<sup>6</sup> Colombijn, Freek and J. Thomas Lindblad. 2002. *Roots of Violence in Indonesia Contemporary violence in historical perspective* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies)

<sup>7</sup> De Vries, Hent. 2002. *Religion and Violence: Philosophical Perspectives from Kant to Derrida*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press)



violence is constructed by culture. The former argument is usually held by some psychologists and biologists, and the latter is held by some sociologists and (post)structuralists.

Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Thomas Hobbes, Konrad Lorenz, Baruch Spinoza, and Reiner Maria Rilke, are those who argue that violent has its root in human nature. This nature potentially inside human as unconscious feeling which can emerges as expression of frustration, anger, jealous, shame, and hatred. Some theories (e.g. psycho-analytic, evolutionary-biological) were built from this point of view that shows human nature has similarity to animal instinct. *Homo homini lupus* and 'the fight for survival' expressed human response to the reality and interaction with the other. In extreme pole of this is some biologist's assumption that there is a 'specific gene' which control human to conduct misbehavior<sup>8</sup>.

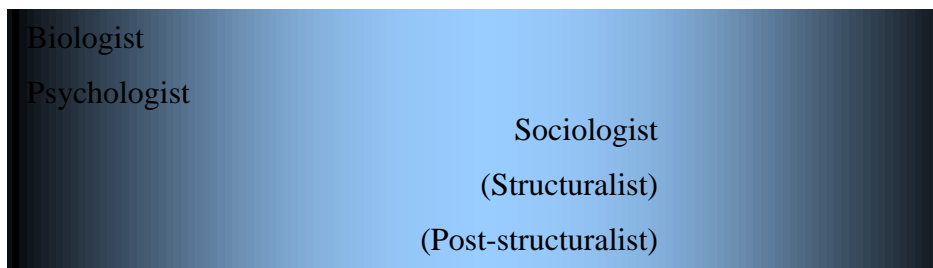
Jean Jacques Rousseau, Erich Fromm, Johan Galtung, and some other structuralists will argue that violent behavior is constructed by culture surround human being. This argument built upon human relationship in social system that influence people into specific culture. Some theories build their argument based on this assumption show that work organization, division labor, political and economic contestation of power, demography, and resources domination have significant relation with violence.

The two approaches and perspectives in viewing the origin of violence can be roughly sketched into this picture.

---

<sup>8</sup> Some biologists believe that medical process can "cure" this "mistake" through surgical treatment (such as lobotomy) for violent behavior.

### Human Natur Cultural Construct



The explanation that had been provided by both perspectives seems not satisfying for us. I would rather view the violent behavior as something related to ‘conflict’ which can be psychological and also culturally influenced. When conflicts are not reduced or settled through negotiations or other constitutional means, it gives rise to violence. Violence is taken as a short cut method for resolution of conflicts. Suppressed sense of deprivation or injustice finds vent through violence. This perspective shows that violence can be expressed through many actual behaviors. Violence can be seen as inherently human nature and as struggle for survive in which people have to compete for resources<sup>9</sup>. We mostly see violence as something physical used of forcing or damaging something else.

## 2. Types of Violence

I think there are many types of violence that can be seen in the context of violence, the ideology surrounding violence, the victims of violence and the perpetrators of violence. Therefore, violence is not only seen as physical, but also psychological, structural, and cultural. The object of violence can be against person(s), community, and state. Violence actions can be determined by purpose (intended, conscious) and unintended (unconscious). Many characters can be attributed to violence as many perspectives explain it.

---

<sup>9</sup> Nashir, Haedar. 1999. Agama dan Krisis Kemanusiaan Modern, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar)

Therefore, we can say that there are verbal violence, intellectual violence, physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, domestic violence, political violence, economic violence, theological (religious) violence, crimes of violence, cultural violence, structural violence, ethnic violence, etc. The problem is all of these characters of violence are too wide, and in fact, some of them can mix together in single violent acts.

A classification of violence in Indonesia has been proposed by Munir. He distinguishes violence by the state, violence between members of community, and violence by the community against the state. *First*, violence by the state is violence legalized by laws and decrees; violence by the state apparatus to divert attention; and indifference of the state apparatus in response to cases of mass violence. *Second*, violence between members of community can be seen as violence with religious background; violence based on beliefs prevailing in a community, such as ideas about purification; violence related to thematic issues. *Third*, violence by the community against the state apparatus is violence motivated by frustration and disappointment, violence motivated by self-defense; violence motivated by revenge in connection with injustice<sup>10</sup>.

Similar to this classification was proposed by Liberation Theology in the concept of a spiral of violence<sup>11</sup>. This concept can help us in a comprehensive understanding of violence. The concept of spiral of violence from Dom Helder Camara seems to me as vicious circle of violence that continually turns on, from one to another. The concept explain how violence

---

<sup>10</sup> Colombijn, Freek and J. Thomas Lindblad. 2002. Roots of Violence in Indonesia Contemporary violence in historical perspective (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies)

<sup>11</sup> Nelson-Pallmeyer, Jack. 2003. Is Religion Killing Us? Violence in the Bible and the Quran (New York: Trinity Press International)

1 turn to violence 2, and then turn to violence 3 that to some extent will create violence 1 worse than before.

Violence 1 is characterized by oppression, hunger, and poverty. This is linked to economic inequalities or whatever directly or indirectly prevents them from receiving medical care, attending school, or receiving adequate nourishment. This kind of violence is rooted in the structures of unjust societies. Violence 2 is characterized by rebellion. People living in poverty or misery or in the midst of other oppressive situations sometimes strike out violently against those they hold responsible for their misery. People who protest against violence 1 often do so nonviolently. Violence 3 is the repressive violence used by elite forces against who protest or rebel. This includes the lethal violence of military forces aligned with the state<sup>12</sup>.

Those classifications of violence built on the concept of structural violence in which have political nuance. Nelson adds two other kinds of violence, i.e. dysfunctional deflective violence and spiritual violence. *Dysfunctional deflective violence* is violence that used against others that does not challenge unjust systems. A contemporary example would be the high incidence of murder and crime that characterizes many impoverished neighborhoods. *Spiritual violence* or violent images of God explains human misery as God's will. God promises to crush the people's enemies directly or enable "the people of God" to do so. Contemporary examples of spiritual violence includes explanations that Hurricane Mitch, the terrorist attacks at the World Trade Center, and AIDS are God's response to sin. They also involve all efforts to justify human violence and holy warfare through appeals to the

---

<sup>12</sup> Nelson-Pallmeyer, Jack. 2003. *Is Religion Killing Us? Violence in the Bible and the Quran* (New York: Trinity Press International)

divine<sup>13</sup>.

The interesting classification of violence is proposed by Galtung who differentiates between direct violence and structural violence. He defines a direct violence as any action of violent that intended by actors; and structural violence has been built into social structures which are perceived as indirect violence (Galtung 1997). The continual circle of violence of both can create cultural violence.

### **3. Religious violence.**

Violence had been a historical fact of all religions. Some of them, ironically, are emerged and motivated by “God’s commands” which is written in the scriptures. Many incidents and bloody events are expected have religions sanctioned. This phenomenon creates an assumption that violence is embedded in religion. We cannot deny the bloody history of human civilization, but it is important to define what do we meant by “religious violence”. Religious violence can be said also as theological violence that means an aggression against something on the grounds of religious teachings. This means that violence get an authorized version from religion.

"Terror in the Mind of God" is a book by Mark Juergensmeyer that explores the connection between religion and acts of terrorism. It examines how individuals and groups use religious beliefs to justify violence and examines various case studies from different religious traditions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Juergensmeyer presents an in-depth analysis of the motivations and ideologies that drive religiously motivated terrorism, shedding light on the complex interplay of politics, religion, and violence in the contemporary world.

---

<sup>13</sup> Nelson-Pallmeyer, Jack. 2003. *Is Religion Killing Us? Violence in the Bible and the Quran* (New York: Trinity Press International)

Juergensmeyer delves into the psychology behind religious terrorism, exploring how individuals can be radicalized and driven to commit violent acts in the name of their faith. He also examines the role of fundamentalism and the impact of globalization on religious extremism. Throughout the book, Juergensmeyer provides nuanced perspectives and challenges simplistic explanations for terrorism, highlighting the diversity within religious communities and the range of interpretations of sacred texts.

Furthermore, Juergensmeyer emphasizes the importance of understanding the social, political, and economic contexts in which religious violence occurs. He argues that addressing the root causes of terrorism requires addressing issues such as poverty, political oppression, and exclusion, which can contribute to feelings of anger and resentment that are then channeled into acts of terror.

Overall, "Terror in the Mind of God" provides a comprehensive examination of the complex relationship between religion and terrorism, offering insights into the motivations and ideologies that underlie acts of violence perpetrated in the name of God. Juergensmeyer challenges readers to critically examine these issues and consider the broader social and political factors that contribute to religiously motivated terrorism.

Religious violence can be seen by two points of view. *First* view sees religion as cause of violence based on its teachings against all evils. This assumption is built on perception that religion motivates its adherents to act violently based on faith. People will argue that authorization of violence by religion is seen as its inherent character of absolutism. Any religion makes authoritative claims that demand its followers to submit. Religions usually tell the followers in a way or another that they are special and anyone who does not follow the religion will or should be punished in some way. This teaching

drives some people to go to the extreme measure of harming people of other faiths. Religions have potential of divisiveness which is a particular group considers itself as divinely chosen and draws sharp boundaries between itself and others. Once a feeling of 'special creature' is believed, the enemy has been clearly identified, and violence can possibly become actual. In "When Religion Becomes Evil", Charles Kimball claims that more wars have been waged and more people killed in the name of religion than by "any other institutional force in human history"<sup>14</sup>.

The *second* point of view sees religious violence as misused religious teaching for 'secular purposes' or it may be called as religious politicization. This view rejects all kinds of arguments that religion motivates its adherents to attack 'something' violently based on its teachings. Such people will sometimes argue that the real motivation behind so-called religious violence is in fact economic and political, not religion. Others will argue that people who do violence are, by definition, not religious. Religions teach love and peace. Any violence that is apparently did in the name religion, moreover killing innocent people, is a religious deviation, and abusing religious teachings. In simply words, it was not religion. It was secularism<sup>15</sup>.

We may define religious violence as a term that covers all phenomena where religion, in any of its forms, is either the subject or object of individual or collective violent behavior (Wikipedia Encyclopedia). This definition does not limit violence into religious motivational only, but it covers all incidents that include participation of religions. I think we better to comprehend religious violence as incidents that many factors may contribute, and not only

---

<sup>14</sup> Kimball, Charles. 2002. When Religion Becomes Evil (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco)

<sup>15</sup> Juergensmeyer, Mark. 2001. Terror in the Mind of God the Global Rise of Religious Violence, (London: University of California Press)

blaming religion as the major factor that led people to act violently. Religious violence

### **B. Religion and the Justification of Violence**

The history of major religious traditions illustrates why people from different centuries and beliefs came to regard religion as a major factor in communal strife. In each faith tradition one can find sufficient ambiguity in its founding texts and stories to justify killing for the glory of God. Some religious teachings are interpreted to justify their violence in God's name. Each faith community feels of the threat of extinction then justified using violence in order to defend. Some of them view the opportunity to expand interpreted its fundamental teachings to accommodate the changing circumstances by sanctioning the use of violence to protect and secure its own sectarian interests.

The fact that all major world faiths have at times sanctioned the use of violence to protect or to promote their own sectarian interests allows religious terrorists today to claim moral justification for their actions. The faith inspired terrorist can find, in his or her religious tradition, role models that give legitimacy to their own use of violence<sup>16</sup>. I will mention, in brief, some examples of justification of violence by some major world's religion from normative and historical perspectives.

Hinduism sanctions the use of violence under specific conditions. Hinduism none the less sees it a sacred duty in situations of self-defense. Violence is not used to terrorize but to protect oneself and the world from evil and injustice. To die defending one's country in the Hindu belief is to be

---

<sup>16</sup> McTernan, Oliver. 2003. *Violence in God's Name: Religion in an Age of Conflict*, (New York: Orbis Books)



assured a place in *viraswargam*, the warriors' heaven<sup>17</sup>.

The Mahayana Buddhist tradition argues that the Buddhist obligation to end suffering, stop harm, foster compassion and to promote peace paradoxically requires violence provided that it is the only way one can prevent further harm. This limited and specific use of force must be driven by a deep sense of compassion and not desire for vengeance, greed, and hatred. Buddhist monks fought in the Korean War in the belief that they were being faithful to their vows because they were killing in order to save people (McTernan 2003: 49, 51).

In Judaism, an era of peace and prosperity was believed would be ushered in only after a period of extreme violence in which the uncircumcised, their oppressors, would be 'swallowed up'. The Dead Sea Scrolls that are known as *Florilegium* contain eschatological commentaries on some of the references to the messiah in the Hebrew Scriptures. The verse from Psalms that reads, 'You will rule them with a rod of iron; you will dash them to pieces like pottery'<sup>18</sup>, is interpreted to mean that the messiah will act like a great warrior, who will struggle against the kings of the pagan nations, and who will be recognized as the messiah only after leading his people to victory in battle<sup>19</sup>.

Christian may use Jesus words, 'I have not come to bring peace but a sword'<sup>20</sup>, and 'If you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one'<sup>21</sup>, to

---

<sup>17</sup> McTernan, Oliver. 2003. *Violence in God's Name: Religion in an Age of Conflict*, (New York: Orbis Books)

<sup>18</sup> Paige, Glenn D (ed.). 1998. *Islam tanpa Kekerasan*, (Yogyakarta: LKiS)

<sup>19</sup> Nordholt, Henk Schulte. 2002. "A Genealogy of Violence" in Colombijn, Freek and J. Thomas Lindblad (ed.). *Roots of Violence in Indonesia Contemporary violence in historical perspective* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies)

<sup>20</sup> Wiyata, A. Latief. 2002. *Carok: Konflik Kekerasan dan harga Diri Orang Madura*, (Yogyakarta: LKiS)

<sup>21</sup> Sofyan, Muhammad. 1999. *Agama dan Kekerasan dalam Bingkai Reformasi*, (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Media Pressindo)

justify force using violence. The violent images in the book of Revelation like that of four angels who were released 'to kill a third of mankind' (9:15). It was Urban II's predecessor Gregory VII who was the mastermind behind the radical shift in official church teaching on the use of violence. He identified the spiritual combat against the flesh in which St Paul encouraged all Christian to engage with an earthly warfare that was undertaken for the sake of Christ. At that time, church offering a third way of receiving forgiveness: warriors could gain remission for their sins by doing what they were good at: killing or being killed in God's name would assure them of a place in paradise<sup>22</sup>. The leading Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century Luther, Zwingli and Calvin also sanctioned the use of the sword.<sup>23</sup>

The reward for fighting, in Islam, unrelentingly against disbelieving neighbors was the assurance of paradise: 'Whose fights in the cause of Allah, be he slain or be he victorious, we shall soon give him a great reward'. The religious justification for fighting given in the Quran is rooted in the historical injustice. Muslims were only to fight to right an injustice, to defend the community and to protect religion from destructives forces. The order to fight in the 'cause of Allah' was given when it was felt that the survival of the community was under threat from hostile neighbors. The sanctioning of a more proactive use of the sword was justified when non-believers had dishonored their pledges with Muslims<sup>24</sup>.

Those examples illustrate some reasons that could justify violence. Some conditions would probably explain on how religion contributes on

---

<sup>22</sup> Kuswanjono, Arqom. 1999. Kekerasan dalam Perspektif Etika dan Agama, Relief, Journal of Religious Studies, Vol. 1, No. 2, Yogyakarta, May 2003

<sup>23</sup> McTernan, Oliver. 2003. Violence in God's Name: Religion in an Age of Conflict, (New York: Orbis Books)

<sup>24</sup> McTernan, Oliver. 2003. Violence in God's Name: Religion in an Age of Conflict, (New York: Orbis Books)

violence. Charles Kimball (2002) mentioned five conditions in which religion has potential violence, they are: (1) truth claims, (2) unquestioning acceptance of traditional religious interpretations, (3) romanticism, (4) legalize any act that is intended for protecting religion, sacred places, and identity, (5) holy war.<sup>25</sup> argues that fundamentalists, to some extent, can express their belief violently. Fundamentalism can become the fuel that indirectly or directly leads to violence. Religious violence was undertaken by person or group who see themselves as chosen, as elect instruments to carry out divine purposes.

There are certain circumstances where religious violence can grow strongly. Political repression, social injustice, unemployment, and poverty create fertile feeding grounds for violence. Insecurity, danger and distrust are reasons in which increase communalism, and will become fuel of attacking the threat object. This threat object will be identified as 'the other', and then may be seen as wrong, ignorant or even demonic, thereby deserving of humiliation and even violence.

Religious violence in this regard has two aspects: personal and communal. In the level personal, religion has possibility inspire someone in attacking the other violently. The area of personal violence limited to the relation between individuals, which usually private such as domestic violence; and also relation between person and his/her community. In the level communal, religion became a group identity that binds its followers and could possibly mobilize them against something to achieve certain goals. Communal violence usually connected to the relation between groups in public area and its goal usually political such as internal group conflicts, inter-religious

---

<sup>25</sup> Kelsay, John. 1993. *Islam and War A Study in Comparative Ethics*, (Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press

conflicts, and religion and state conflicts<sup>26</sup>. Dividing religious violence into two aspects is not intended to separate them as if no relation between personal and communal violence. According to Galtung, violence can be divided into personal and structural violence. Following Galtung's analysis on violence, he shows that personal violence more visible than structural violence. The victims of personal violence is directly suffer, but the object of structural violence doesn't feel become the victim of it<sup>27</sup>.

In many cases, religion does not directly contribute to violence, but frequently being used in legitimizing it. Holy war is one example. In the history of Christianity, non-violence tradition had been changed when state mixed with religion<sup>28</sup>. It is not easy to determine whether violence was caused by politic or religion. I think religious war is nothing more than political war. Politic had change religion into more worldly matters than spirituality, and politic could use religion for serving political desires. But it is still important to see the role of religion in justifying violence against something. A typology below will help to understand about how religion contributes in violence. This typology is built on motivational direction and attitude of religious groups in viewing violence surround them.

1. Religion inspires its followers to act violently. I name it 'religious inspiration' or 'inspirational motive' which come from scriptures, religious texts. The attack on abortion clinic by Bray is the example. According to

---

<sup>26</sup> Violence between religion and state usually caused by unsatisfied with the state's policy and law enforcement which are seen unacceptable by religious groups. The case in mass amok in Situbondo and Tasikmalaya illustrates this kind of protest to the state and its apparatus (Sofyan, 7).

<sup>27</sup> Hendry, Eka. 2003. Monopoli Tafsir Kebenaran: Wacana Keagamaan Kritis dan Kekerasan Kemanusiaan,, (Pontianak: Kalimantan Persada Press)

<sup>28</sup> Galtung, Johan. Religions, Hard and Soft, Journal of Cross Currents, Winter 1997-98, Vol. 47 Issue 4

Jurgensmeyer<sup>29</sup>:

The creation of terror are done not to achieve a strategic goal, but to make a symbolic statement. Acts of religious violence (terrorism) are intended to illustrate or refer to something beyond their immediate target. The bombing of a public building may dramatically indicate to the populace that the government or the economic forces behind the building were seen as enemies to show the world that they were targeted as satanic foes.

This attack is intended to protest the secular policy which was seen as demonic policy. Bray represent religious group who asses state had deviate from religious teachings.

2. Religion is “being used” for political purposes. I name it religious politicization or ‘instrumental motive’. Minjung theology in Korea asserted the resistance of Christian poor people against Capitalists and dictator ruler in Korea<sup>30</sup>.

3. Religion is used to help its adherents to interpret incidents surround them. I name it ‘interpretational framework’. Nelson mentioned that Christian fundamentalist TV evangelists interpreted the terrorist attack on September 11 as deserved punishments from God to the US because the US had become a nation of abortion, homosexuality, and many other deviations.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Bennett, Clinton. 2005. Muslims and Modernity: an Introduction to the Issues and Debates, (London: Continuum).

<sup>30</sup> Adeney, Bernard T. 1988. Just War, Political Realism, and Faith, (London: The American Theological Library Association & The Scarecrow Press, Inc)

<sup>31</sup> Ali-Fauzi, Ihsan. 2002. “Ambivalensi Sebagai Peluang: Agama, Kekerasan dan Upaya Perdamaian”, dalam Syifaul Arifin, et.all. Melawan Kekerasan Tanpa Kekerasan, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar & Asia Foundation)

## CONCLUSION

Human being is part of animal kingdom, which has many similarities with animal, especially on biological desires. The history of civilization had recorded many catastrophes, ferocities, and damages. Human supremacy over animal is having a capability to control all potentials. Human has two potentials of being good and (or) evil. Both potentials are guided by religious teachings. The emergence of religions in the history was aimed at restoring peace, benevolence and goodness in society. With the advent of religions, good sense developed and man learnt to worship God for their benefit and also learnt to love others.

In this regard, the question that I had been proposed in introduction needs more empirical evidence than normative teachings of religions in creating peace. This is not an easy task (duty) to provide a peace through religions, because the same task had been provided by prophets and religious leaders in the past. If religions cause more violence than peace, we would see every day and never ending warfare (violence) between adherents of various religions. We are often getting hurt painfully when get sick, but do not really aware when enjoying everyday health.

## Bibliography

- Adeney, Bernard T. 1988. *Just War, Political Realism, and Faith*, (London: The American Theological Library Association & The Scarecrow Press, Inc)
- Ali-Fauzi, Ihsan. 2002. "Ambivalensi Sebagai Peluang: Agama, Kekerasan dan Upaya Perdamaian", dalam Syifaul Arifin, et.all. *Melawan Kekerasan Tanpa Kekerasan*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar & Asia Foundation)
- Armstrong, Karen. 2001. *Berperang Demi Tuhan: Fundamentalisme dalam Islam, Kristen, dan Yahudi*, (Jakarta: Serambi & Mizan)
- Bennett, Clinton. 2005. *Muslims and Modernity: an Introduction to the Issues*

- and Debates*, (London: Continuum).
- Berndt, Hagen. 2006. *Agama yang Bertindak: Kesaksian Hidup dari Berbagai Tradisi*, (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Kanisius)
- Colombijn, Freek and J. Thomas Lindblad. 2002. *Roots of Violence in Indonesia Contemporary violence in historical perspective* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies)
- De Vries, Hent. 2002. *Religion and Violence: Philosophical Perspectives from Kant to Derrida*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press)
- Galtung, Johan. *Religions, Hard and Soft*, Journal of Cross Currents, Winter 1997-98, Vol. 47 Issue 4
- Hendry, Eka. 2003. *Monopoli Tafsir Kebenaran: Wacana Keagamaan Kritis dan Kekerasan Kemanusiaan*, (Pontianak: Kalimantan Persada Press)
- Juergensmeyer, Mark. 2001. *Terror in the Mind of God the Global Rise of Religious Violence*, (London: University of California Press)
- Kimball, Charles. 2002. *When Religion Becomes Evil* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco)
- Kelsay, John. 1993. *Islam and War A Study in Comparative Ethics*, (Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press)
- Kuswanjono, Arqom. 1999. *Kekerasan dalam Perspektif Etika dan Agama*, Relief, Journal of Religious Studies, Vol. 1, No. 2, Yogyakarta, May 2003
- McTernan, Oliver. 2003. *Violence in God's Name: Religion in an Age of Conflict*, (New York: Orbis Books)
- Nashir, Haedar. 1999. *Agama dan Krisis Kemanusiaan Modern*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar)
- Nelson-Pallmeyer, Jack. 2003. *Is Religion Killing Us? Violence in the Bible and the Quran* (New York: Trinity Press International)
- Nordholt, Henk Schulte. 2002. "A Genealogy of Violence" in Colombijn, Freek and J. Thomas Lindblad (ed.). *Roots of Violence in Indonesia Contemporary violence in historical perspective* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies)
- Paige, Glenn D (ed.). 1998. *Islam tanpa Kekerasan*, (Yogyakarta: LKiS)
- Sofyan, Muhammad. 1999. *Agama dan Kekerasan dalam Bingkai Reformasi*,

(Yogyakarta: Penerbit Media Pressindo)

Wiyata, A. Latief. 2002. *Carok: Konflik Kekerasan dan harga Diri Orang Madura*, (Yogyakarta: LKiS)