

“STAUROPHOBIA”: FEAR OF THE CROSS BASED ON HATE SPEECH AND SOME WAYS TO FACE IT

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Abstract

This article explores the phenomenon of *staurophobia*, “fear of the cross”. There are negative discourses toward Christians and Christ’s cross, called *staurophobia*. It is related to an attitude towards Christ, either accepting Christ on the one hand, or rejecting Christ, on the other. Since the beginning of Christian history in New Testament, the cross (*stauros*) has been a sign of contradiction. It becomes a stumbling block to non-Christians, while for Christians, it is a sign of salvation. What is Christian’s attitude, if, on the basis of *staurophobia*, non-Christians develop hate speech against them? New Testament gives us glimpses of answers that people should not cause violence. Based on the historical comparative study of some New Testament theological discourses, I propose that Christians should develop a calm socio politico theological attitude toward the negative discourses aroused by outsiders. I also endorse Christians to develop a sense of humour to confront such negative discourses on the cross and crucifix, as once practiced by Francis of Assisi in his encounter with Sultan Malik al-Kamil in Damietta, Egypt.

Keywords: *Christophobia, hate speech, staurophobia, Crucifixion, New Testament*

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Issue

Interreligious dialogue and relationship are not always an easy matter for our society. The ideal condition is that there is a mutual harmony, mutual understanding, mutual respect between different religious believers. Theological doctrines and ethics of religions usually endorse their believers to follow the idealism of their respective religious moral and theological exhortations. It is usually expressed in the communal dialogue and communications that all religions teach the best materials for the benefit of the believers in their social life and interactions. People hope and believe that the high standard teaching of their respective religions will provide them with the best social-compass for their social, communal, and interpersonal life.

In the context of Christian moral theological heritage there is discourse on the seven virtues usually used as a means to educate people to be an ideal person and have a highest idea of personality because it is transformed in and through those noble values. These virtues consist in two categories. First, the four cardinal virtues, adopted and adapted by Thomas Aquinas from the moral philosophy of Aristotle. These are the virtues: prudence (*Prudentia*), justice (*Iustitia*), Fortitude (*Fortitudo*, mental Courage), Temperance (*Temperantia*).¹ The other three virtues are known as theological virtues, taken by Thomas from Paul. These are those following virtues: faith, hope, and love (charity). In the translation of Timothy McDermott,² the virtue of Temperance is

¹ See Richard J. Regan (translator and editor), Aquinas, *The Cardinal Virtues, Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance*, Indianapolis/Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2005.

² See Timothy McDermott, *Summa Theologiae, A Concise Translation*, Methuen, London: 1992.

translated with moderation and thus giving us an image that the ideal of religious moderation can only be achieved through these virtues. Religious moderation since some few years now has been pushed forward by the government to establish the better religious condition and interreligious dialogue and communication in Indonesian context.

But the ideal prescription for social-life of the faithful is not always easy to be realized in the real life of the people. There are a lot of difficulties and challenges that make the social interaction and communication among the members of the society from a various and different religious and cultural background, undergo some hindrances. One of the problems is the phenomenon of *staurophobia* that creates the tendency toward hate-speech. Or even we can also say that hate speech are coming out from the fear of the cross, the fear of the Christian (maybe also called Christianophobia (the parallel of Islamophobia), the phobia of Christians).

This article explains the social hate speech coming out of a certain psychological fear usually known as *staurophobia*. But what is *staurophobia*? Etymologically speaking, *staurophobia* consists of two root words in Greek, namely *stauros* (cross, usually in the shape of capital letter X;³ in some places it is known as a pillar of ignition, see Est., 2:23; 5:14; 7:9-10) and *phobia* (phenomenon of psychological fear that cannot be easily explained and therefore it is called irrational-fear). Then comes the combination of *staurophobia*, fear (*phobia*) of the cross (*stauros*). Based on such etymological roots, then the *staurophobia* is a psychic or mental pain characterized by irrational and excessive and irrational fear (*phobia*) of the cross (*stauros*).⁴ This article, by using *staurophobia* as its title, will discuss the hate speech comes out of such a fear of the cross, *staurophobia*. Because of the fear of the cross people produce hate speech to Christianity. And based on the short analysis and study of some texts of the New Testament, the author tries to put forward some way out whenever people undergo such hate speech. And based on the study of the Church history, the author also put forward the solution once supposed to be experimented by Saint Francis of Assisi in his encounter with Sultan Malik al-Kamil.

Situating the Research Study in a Short Bibliographical Review

Theological discourses on the cross (*stauros*) are not limited in Christian circles only. There are also some theological studies on the cross made by Muslim thinkers and theologians. Muslim theologians, when they talked about the cross, will not acknowledge that Jesus was ever crucified on the cross. For them the crucifixion-event did not happen. This perspective was clearly deciphered by Richard W. Oakes in his book, *The Cross of Christ: Foundational Islamic Perspectives* (Lanham Lexington

³ Because we know three forms of cross, to persecute criminals from the ancient world. There is a cross in a form of + (plus) sign. It is known to this day, the most common in Christian world. There is also a cross in the shape of a large capital letter T; it is referred as Tau. The Greek word *stauros* refers to the X-shaped cross. In this paper, the word *stauros* refers to all forms of the cross that have been mentioned above. See Andreas Andreopoulos, *The Sign of the Cross, the Gesture, the Mystery, the History*, Brewster, Massachusetts, Paraclete Press, pp.16-17, 2006.

⁴ The same phenomenon can also be called *cruciphobia*. The etymological origin of this *cruciphobia* can be traced in Latin tradition (presumably because it is used in Latin tradition of the Roman Church). Etymologically speaking, *cruciphobia* consists of two root words namely *crux* (*crucis*; Latin) and *phobia* (Greek).⁴ *Crux* (*nominativus*) means cross, usually the cross in the form of the sign plus (+). The term *staurophobia*, therefore, can also be expressed in its synonym, *cruciphobia* which is a phobia (irrational and unexplained fear) of *crux* (cross, Latin).

Book, 2020). Such an Islamic theological point of view has been adopted for a long time by Muslim believers because it is deeply rooted in their sacred scripture and theological tradition. So strong was the theological view that there appear a lot of theological discourses with a main negative tone in character. And besides there appear also the phenomenon of denying the historical reality of cross and crucifixion.⁵ There appears a phenomenon of phobia of the cross (*staurophobia*) and the phenomenon of insulting the cross in general, seeing cross with the spirit of hostility and disgust.

Different from the above tendency, Christian theological discourses on the cross (*theologia crucis*) took a contrary direction. There is positive discourses and attitude toward the cross, usually called *the love of the cross*, and the devotion of the cross. Such a theological tendency is mainly represented by Richard Viladesau. He has published five serial books on the cross. In those serials of books, he has made a scholarly research-study on the cross in the history of Christian arts. In this serial of historical researches, he has learned about how the theologians and Christian arts have thought and reflected on the cross and Christ's suffering. Viladesau has made a historical comparative study of the cross and write them down in five books.⁶ First he concentrated on the beauty of the cross. Here he especially focused on the study of the passion of Christ in theology and the arts, from the catacombs to the end of the Renaissance period. Secondly, he concentrated on the idea of the triumph of the cross. Here he especially focused on the study of the passion of Christ in theology and arts from Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation period. Thirdly Viladesau concentrated to the *pathos* of the cross. Here he focused on the research of the passion of Christ in theology and arts at Baroque era. Then he concentrated to the folly of the cross. Here he focused on the study of Christ's passion in theology and arts in early modernity. Finally, he concentrated to the wisdom and power of the cross. Here he focused on the passion of Christ in theology and arts in the late modernity and postmodernity period. These are Viladesau's complete survey of history of the cross perception among Christian believers and especially their art works.

Those two different perspectives usually termed in the anthropology with the emic and etic perspectives. In a research study people usually make a distinction between the emic and etic perspectives. Following Marvin Harris' book *Cultural Materialism: The Struggle for a Science of Culture* (1979:32) I would like to say that "Emic operations have as their hallmark the elevation of the native informant to the status of ultimate judge of the adequacy of the observer's descriptions and analysis." While "Etic operations have as their hallmark the elevation of observers to the status of ultimate judges of the categories and concepts used in descriptions and analyses." Related to the previous paragraphs I can say that the emic perspective is the perspective of the participants and in this case the perspective of Villadesau as a Christian theologian making scholarly research on the cross. And the etic perspective is the perspective from an observer's point of view. These two different perspectives are closely related to the fact that a researcher is an outsider or an insider related to the "object" of the study. If the researcher comes from the inside of "the object" of the study, then he is called the insider. His perspective is emic perspective, the perspective of the one who come from the site of research. It is an approach owned by the insider, insight from inside. While on the other hand we also know the etic approach. It is an

⁵ Some people even develop and use a different word for the usual term of crucifixion: they use *crucifiction* instead of crucifixion. The assumption is that it was only a fiction, hence crucifiction.

⁶ For the books of Viladesau, see the list of his five books in Bibliography at the end of this paper.

approach own by the outsiders (in this study the approach of the Muslims). The difference between these two perspectives is mainly determined by their own understanding of the object of research.

An insider has a close connection with the object of research and hence the accusation of the un-objectivity. While an outsider has no connection with the object of the study and hence, he is supposed to have an objective position. But it can also be said that an outsider, being has a certain spatial distance with the object of the discourse also do not have a clear understanding and an empathetic approach to the object, something that is strongly emphasized in the phenomenological approach. Applied to the subject of this article, the insiders are those who have a Christian faith, while the outsiders are those who do not have a Christian faith and contexts for study. To be more precise, in this case, the outsiders are Muslim people and their discourses on the Christian faith and theology. While the insiders are Christian people represented in this particular case by one of their theologians, Richard Villadessau, who making a serious and deep theological elaboration on the content of Christian faith and especially on the cross.

Research Method and the Possibility of Conflict of Interpretation

This study will mainly use the *comparative-historical* method. It is mainly a historical comparative study of the texts and theological discourses existed in the church history and biblical theology. Historical development of the church and biblical interpretation will be shortly described and then such historical information will be compared with each other in order to get its main historical main ideas.

Based on those short historical observations and surveys, this paper will establish an awareness on how to confront some negative discourses coined by outsiders toward Christians and their belief. This paper prefers to propose the soft and mature attitude as a Christian toward those negative and bad hate theological discourses. It is hoped that after Christians have taken some historical insights then people will achieve some degree of wisdom or prudence to live in the middle of society with its own difficulties and challenges.

In this context it is clear that this historical comparative method will be characterized by ethical consideration. It means that by studying historical development Christian people will hopefully become calm and wise to confront all the negative and bad theological discourse put forward and developed by non-Christians. They should take the ethical attitude of Christ from the cross who give pardon to those who have done those cruelties upon Him because Jesus believe that they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34).⁷

Realizing the existence of the two different perspectives of emic and etic point of view, I fully realize the possibility of conflict of interpretation once elaborated by Paul Ricoeur in one of his books. Paul Ricoeur himself understand interpretation as "...the work of thought which consists in deciphering the hidden meaning in the apparent meaning, in unfolding the levels of meaning implied in the literal meaning." (See, *The Conflict of Interpretation*, p.13). The result of this process is a compilation of meaning formulated verbally in some sentences or phrases. This process of deciphering and unfolding is different from one person to another person, even also in the course of

⁷ See Donald Senior, CP, *The Passion of Christ in Luke*, Philippines, St.Paul Publications, 1999, pp.128-129. See also Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah, From Getsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels, Vol.2*, New York: Doubleday, 2008, pp.179-182. See also Raymond E. Brown, *Christ in the Gospels of the Liturgical Year*, Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2008:179-182.

time within one self. A compilation of meaning that have been appropriated by someone, maybe will differ from a compilation of meaning that have been appropriated in the other time flow. Such a difference has a strong tendency to be in a potential conflict with one another. When it occurs within one self a process to adjust the potential conflict would be undertaken peacefully. But when it takes place between different person or different group of people, then comes the possibility of the conflict of interpretation. The differences in the process of deciphering and unfolding meaning can come out in a certain conflict, hence the term of a conflict of interpretation. Here we do not talk about the possibility of the fusion of horizons once put forwarded by Gadamer in his great book *Truth and Method*.

The conflict of interpretation is an event of colliding between two different historical compilation of meaning and understanding of on object. In this context this possible conflict and confrontation which consists only in a verbal confrontation can become in the course of time, a bodily and physical conflict and confrontation. What started as a verbal argue can become finally a physical and bodily collision. The conflict of interpretation can become a source for a physical conflict and confrontation especially when one side of the conflict cannot argue verbally and reasonably his or her argumentation and position on a certain issue.

In the discourses on the cross of Paul recorded in one of his well-known letters to the Corinthians, we can find one example of this conflict of interpretation or at the very least the difference in understanding the cross and the verbal formulation of such understanding. We know well that the interpretation of the Jews and the Greeks are totally different from the interpretation and understanding of the Christians represented in this particular case by Paul himself. It is stated clearly there in the text in the following formulation: "And so, while the Jews demand miracles and the Greeks look for wisdom, here are we preaching a crucified Christ: to the Jews an obstacle that they cannot get over, to the pagans madness, but to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is the power and the wisdom of God." (1Cor 1:22-23). These theological differences can become a physical and bodily conflict and confrontation. And it is to avoid their ability and possibility to make a physical attack toward Paul that Paul make a quick move out and away from Athen to Corinth (Acts 17-18).

Historical Context and Consideration

Historical and theological discourse on *staurophobia* phenomenon is very important because of the following two reasons. First, because the cross is, theologically and historically, very important in the lives of Christian people from the beginning of their historical existence until the present time. Theology of cross (*theologia crucis*) is very important for the life in spirituality (especially among Catholics). It should be emphasized from the beginning that the praxis of spirituality devotion is not presumably the creation of later Catholics (tradition), but also has a strong foundation in the holy book itself.⁸ In the liturgical celebration of Good Friday, for example, every year Catholics perform the ritual of honouring the cross; presumably this is an old tradition

⁸ See Fransiskus Borgias, "The Cross: From Scandalum, to Praise and Terror," in *Missio, Journal of Education and Culture*, Vol.6, No.1, 2014: 21-40.

of the church.⁹ There is the tradition of making a devotion of the Way of the Cross on every Friday during fasting period or Lenten time (forty days before the great celebration of Easter Sunday). This tradition is also quite old already, though it may not be as old as the liturgical age of honouring the cross that has been mentioned above.

Secondly, in our present days the discussion of the symptoms and facts of *stauophobia* is very important and urgent considering the fact that there is a negative-theological discourse spreading in our society that shows the phenomena and facts of *stauophobia* (fear of the cross).¹⁰ There are people out there who, in their religious-discourses in the public sphere and also social-media, develop a fear or even disgust towards the cross, or maybe even disgust and dislike of those who venerate the cross as a noble sign in their life. Things like this should be watched out, because it is possible that from *stauophobia phenomenon* they will easily shift into *christenophobia phenomenon*, fear and disgust of Christians. This cautionary discourse is not primarily intended to build the same attitude of hatred and disgust, but is intended to prepare Christians to face all the worst possibilities that could arise in the dynamic development of the history of political life in a country like Indonesia. It seems that in every religion there is a kind of feeling to build a brotherhood that includes all human beings (regardless of religions), but there are always symptoms that only limit the scope of “humanity” to the realms of the same-member religion only.

But before going further, it should be emphasized that the phenomenon of *stauophobia* (fear of the cross) is by no means a new phenomenon. It is already a very old phenomenon. In particular, the *stauophobia* phenomenon is as old as the history of the existence of Christianity itself. It has also been recorded in several New Testament writings (see for example Phil 3:18; 1Cor 1:23). After it has been recorded in New Testament, almost throughout church history and mission history, it has appeared to the surface. There is an interesting point that should also be noted here, namely that in many horror films in Europe and America, the cross and especially its *corpus* (crucifix) are often used as tools for doing exorcism, a means to frighten and exorcise demons and bad spirits. Usually, demons and bad spirits in these films got scared and run away when they see crosses of any shape and size, including the cross at the end of a string of rosary seeds (Catholic prayer beads).

Here there is an interesting phenomenon, namely that those who are afflicted by the symptoms of *stauophobia* are demons, while humans actually feel safe and receive safety and protection from demons by the cross and its *corpus* (crucifix). There are films that depict the actors and the actress hugging and kissing crosses in order to ask for protection and a sense of security from disturbances of the demons roaming around them. Houses are also protected by these crosses, by placing cross in the house or hanging a cross on each wall in the family hall of the house. There is a strong conviction that has been ingrained since the fourth century C.E, which is associated with Emperor Constantine the Great, that in the cross there is victory, because the sign of the cross people can achieve glorious victory. Or to use its original expression in Latin, “*in hoc signo vinces*” (in this sign, that is the cross, you will win, meaning that they will be able

⁹ According to the liturgy expert, Abbot Gueranger OSB, this tradition has emerged already since the fourth century CE in Holy Land, in Jerusalem (Judea). See Abbot Gueranger OSB, *The Liturgical Year, Passiontide and Holy Week*, The Newmann Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1949, pp.486-487.

¹⁰ Here I refer to a video from an Ustadz (without mentioning the name, I hope the readers the name) which shows a discourse about the fear of the cross, especially of Him hanging on the cross.

to defeat enemy by using the sign of the cross).¹¹ Then there occur historical and theological shift from the expression of “in the cross there is victory” to the expression of “*in cruce salus*”, meaning “*in the cross there is salvation*.” This is, of course, a great theological shift from a just sense of “victory” (sociological terminology) to a sense of “salvation” (theological terminology). Maybe some people will argue that there is no shift actually because the victory is seen and realized as the salvation.

Sign of Contradiction

We do know that from the beginning crosses (*stauros*) have always been a sign of contradiction in the history of the church and Christianity. In the history of biblical theology, we have Christology, a rational theological discourse about Christ.¹² And besides we also have *Staurology*, a rational-religious-devotional discourses about cross (*stauros*), especially the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Just as New Testament Christology is very diverse, it is evident from the many titles that the faithful (especially the writers of New Testament) have put on or given to Jesus,¹³ so also *staurology*, from the beginning is diverse; it is not a singular phenomenon. Apart from that fact it should be added that the discourses of New Testament Christology are marked by a contrast between two theological discourses: the “outsider’s” opinion about Jesus, and the “insider’s” (disciple) opinion about Him (Mark 8:27-30; Matt 16:13-20; Luke 9:18-21).

In Synoptic gospels Jesus challenges His disciples: what do people say about Me? They gave several (more than one opinion) answers (see Mark 8:27-30; Matt 16:13-20; Luke 9:18-21). That is the discourse or opinion (view) of outsiders about Jesus. In the final analysis, it turns out to be plural. But when Jesus asked the disciples themselves: “Who do you think and say that I am?” I imagined that there was an awful feeling of a pause and a gripping silence, which only Peter’s answer could overcome. His reply was a famous Christological leap of faith (on the part of disciples represented by Peter). Because of this answer of Peter prove the strong personal faith, according to Matthew, Jesus gave Simon a famous title: and that title is *Peter*, which later become his personal (proper) name. I quote here in its Latin version: “*Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam*” (Matt 16:18).

Just as the discourses of Christology in the New Testament are plural, so also the discourses of *staurology* in New Testament times is also plural and marked by the distinction between “outsider’s” discourse (*etic*-approach) and “insider’s” discourse (*emic*-approach). Maybe readers will ask, where we can find this distinction in the New Testament writings? According to my observational-reading, such a distinction is seen

¹¹ See Andreopoulos, *The Sign of the Cross*, pp.17-18.

¹² Christology is a scientific rational-critical discourse on the mystery of the person of Christ. This is different from the understanding that has developed in some circles who define Christology as a scientific discourse on Christians. It seems that the latter neologism is related to the formation of the word Islamology which developed among Orientalists. As a counterpart, Occidentalists coined the term Christology in the sense of the Christianity. This paper uses the word Christology in the original meaning of the word meant by Christians.

¹³ About these titles see Cletus Groenen OFM, *Kuliab Tertulis Mengenai Kitab Suci. Yesus Kristus dalam Perjanjian Baru (Written Lectures/Courses on the Scripture. Jesus Christ in the New Testament)*, Nusa Indah: Ende, Flores, without year. In it Groenen reviews 14 titles attributed to Jesus by the First Christians. For example: Jesus, Son of David, Christ, Servant of God, Mediator, Word, Light of the World, High Priest, Lamb of God, Saviour, Son of God, Kyrios, Son of Man, and Alpha kai Omega. St. Darmawijaya also discusses the titles of Jesus. See St. Darmawijaya, *Gelar-gelar Jesus (The Attributes of Jesus)*, Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1987. I mentioned some titles that are not available in Groenen: The Bright Morning Star (253), Head (241), The One who will come (227), the bride (157), Divine Healer or Physician (127), Good Shepherd (119), etc.

in Paul's statement to the Corinthians: "The Jews want a sign and the Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: For the Jews a stumbling block (*scandalum* in Latin or *scandalon* in Greek) and for the Gentiles a foolishness (*stultitiam, morian*) (1Cor 1:22-23)." The expression in this quotation is "outsider's" discourses. Paul, as one of "insiders", know this expression. "Outsider's" discourse (*etic*-approach) is represented by two groups, namely Jews and Greeks (the non-Jewish people; also known as the unbelievers). Meanwhile, the "insider's" discourse (*emic*-approach) appears in the following part of the above sentence: "...but for those who are called, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1Cor 1:24). Two *etic*-perspectives are directly contrasted and compared with one *emic*-perspective. It seems like an unbalanced comparison (two to one). But it turns out that that is not the determining factor. The most decisive factor is the internal and personal appreciation of *emic*-discourse itself, how we ourselves perceive and understand cross. That is the idea that I would like to discuss further in the following section of this paper.

The most important and interesting thing in my understanding is that, according to New Testament, the decisive point is not the "outsider's" theological discourse (*etic*-approach), but the "insider's" theological discourses (*emic*-approach). In the case of Christological discourses, the decisive thing is the personal view of Jesus' disciples (represented by Peter). Other people's opinions and views depend on their perspective only.¹⁴ It is their own business and responsibility. Just leave them with their own views and opinions. We as insiders (the representation of *emic*'s view) cannot do much about the views, opinions, and judgment of these outsiders. We have to leave it or just leave it as it is.

It is also the case with Paul's *staurological* and theological discourse: the determining factor is not the external (*etic*-)perspectives, what are the words, opinions, judgment and views of "outsiders", but what are our opinions and views (insiders, *emic* perspective; see 1Cor 1:25) about cross. Opinions of other people can be considered as winds of the day which do not have to interfere with our personal views and attitudes. External (outside) views are their business. Our business is an *emic* (internal) view. This should be the most decisive, the one who gets a priority position in shaping and building meaning and attitude in life. The cross should be a source and a reason for us to boast, as strongly and clearly stated by Paul in his letter to Galatians: "*But may I never boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, because through which the world has crucified to me and I to the world*" (Gal. 6:14). If others want to boast in life in this world for many other reasons, then for Paul and all Christians as well, there is no other reason to boast than to boast in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. I call this way of theological discourse the *pacifist way of speaking of the cross and of Christ*; here Christians are endorsed to heed only the positive discourse rather than heeding the negative discourses on Christ, Christians, and also the cross.

Between *Christophobia* and *Christophilia*

We must realize that in the development of history, there are also some very negative views and opinions about Christ. This view, for example, culminates in the discourse of *antichrist* that appears in several writings of New Testament (1Jo 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2Jo 1:7). Technically speaking I call *antichrist discourses* a *Christophobia* (phobia

¹⁴ On the discussion of Christology in the context of dialogue between religions and also in the context of religious pluralism, see Jacques Dupuis, *Who Do You Say I am? Introduction to Christology*, 1994c. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books.

of Christ). Antichrist discourse (*Christophobia*) is a counter-discourse of positive Christology which originates from and is firmly held by Christians. Since the positive Christological discourse is marked by the love for Christ, I call it *Christophilia* (*philia* or love for Christ). This *Christophilia* is a counter discourse for *Christophobia* (*phobia* of Christ), which is usually marked by the fear (*phobia*) of Christ (*Christo*). Therefore, all negative theological discourses about Christ, wherever it exists or spoken, is a form of the fear of Christ, a form of *Christophobia*.

These views of the two groups that we find in 1Cor 1:22-23 outlined above, were only initially recorded (remembered) in Paul's personal memory. But later in the development of history of early Christianity, especially after the personal memory was written in the form of a writing (letter), then the *personal and individual memory* of Paul, in its turn, was also recorded in the *social and collective memory* of the ancient-early Church and through them it also became the collective-historical memory of the church (started with primitive church and primitive community). This happens through the preservation of this memory in the form of written texts. Thus, it is clear that the role of words and language is important and decisive. The discourse of *Staurophobia* in the written text, is a strong representation of discourse which is marked by the fear of crosses, the phenomenon of *staurophobia*, or in short, it is marked by *cruciphobia*. Paul's view to counter the negative theological discourse of *staurophobia*, represents the discourse of lovers and people who appreciate cross, who saw there and found positive values in cross. As opposed to *staurophobia*, this last attitude may also be called *staurophilia*, or love of the cross (*amor crucis*). New Testament scholars generally argue that discourses between *staurophobia* and *staurophilia* in 1Cor 1:22-23 are the product of Paul's experience when he preached and discussed with Greeks in the *agora* (public city square) of Athens (Acts 17:16-34).

We know that after the discussion (debate) in Athens public city square, it turned out that there were people outside there who were willing to accept it (this is represented by two of the following names: Dionysius Aeropagus, Damaris; Acts 17:34). But there were also those who laughed or scoffed at Paul's speech (preaching) in that city-public-square. It can be imagined, then, that Paul could do nothing about the ridicule of the Epicurean and Stoics Greek philosophers (Acts 17:18). Humanly speaking Paul might feel hurt and sour too. I can imagine that Paul could only become dumb (silent, *silentium magnum*) at the scorns of these philosophers.¹⁵ According to Luke, however, after living in Athens and having cultural and philosophical dialogue in Athen's city square, Paul left for Corinth. It could also be presumed that Paul took the bitter experience in Athen's public city square with him to Corinth. But it can also be presumed that in Corinth, Paul could find a *catharsis* discourses (a kind of discourse on healing, discourse on release) to channel out the guts that could make him feel relieved so that the bitter experience that he felt in Athen's city-public-square can be cured though it is only in the form of discourse (a kind of V. Frankl's *logotherapy*). So, from here came the counter-discourses between *staurophobia* and *staurophilia* as already described above.

¹⁵ The account of the contrast between the "*soma estin sema*" which is in the minds of the Greek philosophers, which presumably strongly underlies their rejection and scorn for Paul's preaching. *Soma* in Greek means body in English. While *sema* means prison. The expression of "*Soma estin sema*" means the body is a prison. If human being died, then the person is released from the prison. Now Paul proclaims the resurrection of the body which is based on the event of the resurrection of Jesus. And that means, by resurrection people is once again put into that prison (*sema*) of body (*soma*). It was this philosophical line of thought that caused the philosophers in Athen's city-square to scoff at Paul and become reluctant to listen to him.

The theological elaboration in this article can also include the related issue which can be termed with the following terminology: *corpophobia* on the one hand and *corpophilia* on the other. It can also be called *somaphobia* (for the former) and *somaphilia* for the later one. These two concepts are mainly related not to the difference between the emic and etic perspectives, but only related to the difference between the theological discourses between the Catholics on the one hand and the Protestants on the other. The former (Catholics) is mainly focus on the discourse on the *corpophilia* (*somaphilia*). While the later (Protestants) is mainly focus on the theological discourse on the *corpophbobia* and *somaphobia*. These two basic theological differences between them resulted in the appearance of their respective crosses: the Catholic crosses are usually equipped with the *corpus Christi*, while the Protestant crosses are empty, without any adornment of *corpus Christi*. But this article will only and mainly focus in the differences between the theological interpretations of the cross owned by the Christians in general, and some interpretation owned by Muslim people.¹⁶

As a person who came from a minority group who was just starting to build his group or community of believers with a staurological and Christological identity, it could be presumed that Paul could do nothing about his mockers in Athens public city square. For example, he could not bring them to court, based on charges of “hate speech”. At that time indeed, in the law of Romans, as far as I can tell, there was no category yet of hate-speech as a category of violation of the law. Of course, hate-speech as a praxis of the people certainly exists (carried out by many people in their daily life), but as a category of violation of the law, presumably it does not exist yet. The solution, therefore, for Paul’s minority group or community is just complaining by himself and stroking his own chest and trying to find a theological catharsis discourse (logotherapy, a healing discourse that is purely internal).

It is also possible that Paul would not have done that step (brought his case to the court, accusations of slander, hate speech), given the fact that in the letter to Romans and 2Corinthians, we can imagine a theology of reconciliation (peace) which Paul developed and presumably embraced. Theology of reconciliation (peace) says that if the final verdict of a case lies within the reach of our power, we should not become a source of further and unnecessary problems. On the contrary, Paul encourages us to be peacemakers like the one that we find in the Beatitudes of Jesus in the gospel of Matthew (Matt 5:9). We have to consider the following quotation: “*Do not return evil for evil; do what’s good for everyone! As much as possible, if it depends on you, live in peace with everyone! My dear brothers and sisters, do not avenge yourself, but give place to God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘Vengeance is mine. I will take vengeance, ‘says the Lord’*” (Rom 12:17-19). Even in the Second Epistle to Corinthians, Paul has also made this reconciliation a work of ministry, a ministry of reconciliation. Paul firmly believed that ministry of reconciliation came from God, who through Jesus Christ had reconciled human being to God. Paul was sure that the work of the ministry of reconciliation had been entrusted by God to him (2Cor 5:18). On that basis I confirm that Paul is trying to keep all this in his heart. Maybe this attitude is similar to Mary’s attitude, who tried to keep all that she experienced in her heart and meditated on it in silence (Luke 2:51). I call these attitudes of Paul *a healing discourse through catharsis*

¹⁶ Actually, this topic is also interesting and important but it will be dropped from the whole paper because we try to focus only on the different perspectives among Christians and Muslims. It is in this context that I want to focus my self and energy. But it does not mean that this issue is not interesting or important. Indeed, they do. But for the time being that is not my focus right now.

discourse, by not taking vengeance to the hatred-speech of other people. Let them be despised by their own speech of their tongue.

Dilemma of Minority

Today, in Indonesia, Christians (Catholics and Protestants) are minority group only. Not only in Indonesia, but also throughout Asian continent, Christians are minority, with the exception of the Philippines where it is the majority, a unique phenomenon, a Catholic majority amidst a far wider and more numerous seas of non-Christians majority. Sometimes the fact of the minority encourages people to develop the discourse of “giving in” only, giving in for the sake of peace and harmony, rather than provoking a commotion, rather than causing bigger riots (in order to solve the social issues). This kind of approach or attitude, of course, is not to blame either. Giving in does not always mean losing or wrong. I call this a “*giving in*” way out for the problem and not a *polemical way-out*.

In my opinion, from a long-term perspective and from a human rights perspective, such attitudes and approaches are not sustained. Here I am reminded of the inspiration I drew from the book of Esther (in the Old Testament). In that book I found the fact that Jews are a minority ethnic-group among the gentiles or unbelievers. Although they are a minority group only, they, however, still have courage enough to struggling to defend their lives and their rights from threats and harsh treatment from the other majority ethnic-groups. The political architect of Jewish ethnic-group in diaspora was Mordecai, who, by inserting his super-beautiful nephew (Esther) into the king’s palace (even also becoming the King’s consort), could influence the direction of political policy and decisions, and royal laws in order to the benefit of their minority lives. At the very least they are not threatened by violence from those who hate them, who in this case is represented by a character named Haman.

Well, that’s what has happened in the past where the term hate-speech was not known yet. Or maybe the term is already known, but not yet included in a category of violation of the law concerning the human dignity and human rights. But in our legal system today, there is already a category of hate speech as a form of law-violation. People who commit hate-speech can be brought to court and can also be sentenced for having committed an act of violation of the law. Therefore, all kinds of discourse that come out of the subconscious that are formed by the symptoms of *stauophobia* are hate-speech which, in my opinion, has met the requirements for legal proceedings. Again, according to my personal perspectives, in the context of a modern democracy, we must not continue to let hate-speech run rampant in society, in our socio-political-religious relations and discourses.

Here, as I write this particular section, I am reminded of the moral-ethical drama that was once ever performed by Saint John Paul II. Indeed, when I write this part, I try to reflect on the famous case that has befallen Pope John Paul II. At that particular time (1981) a (professional) sniper, Mehmed Aliagca, shot Pope John Paul II. It is said that Aliagca actually targeted Pope’s heart, but it turned out that the bullet went sideways and missed the heart. The shooter was finally arrested. But we all know that Aliagca (Turk guy) was forgiven by the Holy Father John Paul II. Forgiveness (the act of giving or offering pardon to other people) must be a moral-ethical obligation of the Pope himself. However, the Italian state (as a political entity with its own sovereign legal system) continues to enforce the law for all forms of violation of the law that occur or are committed within its territory. Therefore, even though Mehmet Aliagca was

pardoned by the Pope, the state is still obliged to enforce the law, to ensure that the law cannot be violated by anyone whosoever.

The insult of the cross always exists throughout the history, in the past, in the present time, and surely also in the time to come. In the present time there are still a lot of hate-speech based on the *stauophobia* phenomenon. Some people become angry with it. Some people get offended by it. All of these reactions are natural and human. To face and confront it we should learn something from the wisdom of Paul. As I have stated above, in the face of hate-speech of Jewish and Greek people, Paul just concentrated on the internal theological discourse of Christians themselves and do not pay attention to the external discourse of the other full of hatred. Paul only emphasizes the Christian belief concerning the cross of Christ. So according to me Paul's way out can be used again for our present time and also for the time to come. We do hope that the inter-religious dialog of the present-day theology of religion can help to bring enlightenment and mutual understanding among different religious believers in the world, in our society. I underline this point because of the strong conviction that the difference in interpretation can bring a conflict of interpretation as well as once ever put forward by the French philosopher, Paul Ricoeur.

Reflecting upon the case of Mehmed Aliagca, who has two sides, I want to say something about the phenomenon of *stauophobia* that has recently spread in a short-viral video, which gave birth to hate-speech, in our lives in this constitutional state of Indonesia. Like Aliagca's case above, morally the *stauophobia* case that occurred here in Indonesia, can and should also be forgiven, and it is understandable. But legally (juridical), presumably it (*stauophobia*) must be processed legally. Morally and ethically, we should forgive those who produce hate-speech because they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34). Even if they know and are aware of it, we still have a moral obligation to forgive him/them and if it is possible also to forget it, of course by remembering Paul's advice in the above letter to the Romans (Rom 12: 17-19). That is on the one hand.

But, on the other hand, I think that the duties and obligations of the state remains and must be realized, must be carried out: and that is the fact that the state must enforce the law so that hate-speech is not rampant, so that people do not utter the hate speech at their own will only without considering its psychological impact upon the other religious believers. We all know that such hate-speech do contains hatred and is hurtful towards other parties who have human rights in this country. In my opinion, therefore, the state must protect all of its citizens from hate-speech, by enforcing the law. Maybe it won't be easy at all. But law studies and history studies must still be done for the sake of humanity and for the common good of all human being.

Theological differences in interpreting an object can become a source of conflict and confrontation. In this case, people can take a political and legal stance by confronting the person or a group of people who develop the negative discourses on the reality of the cross. I called this first stance, a hard theological position. For example, by taking the issue to the court of report the misperception to the police. It is called a confrontative approach or attitude, where people take the hard political and legal position. It seems that, in my reading, Paul do not take this route. He, instead, taking a soft and calm stance by avoiding the centre sites of the potential conflict (in this case, in Athen). If the sequence of the event written in the Acts is true and factual (historical), then we can say that Paul gets out of Athen in order to avoid the conflict and leave for Corinth; and it is in Corinth that Paul develops a soft theological discourse on the

accident he has underwent in a bitter condition on Athen. I call this attitude of Paul with a calm and soft theological attitude.

Paul, therefore, in this case to do not develop his theological discourse on the cross in the presence of his opponents, but from a certain spatial distance, not because of fear, but for the sake of safety, to avoid a potential physical conflict. This soft approach is supported by the texts like the letter to the Romans, saying that “Never repay evil with evil but let everyone see that you are interested only in the highest ideals. Do all you can to live at peace with everyone. Never try to get revenge; leave that, my friends, to God’s anger.” (Rom 12:17-19). This is something very different from the way Paul is presented by Luke in the Acts, where upon Paul directly confront his opponents by debating or developing a verbal defence of his position (Acts 17). In other case, Paul even tries to avoid a direct violence upon him by divert the potential conflict between the conflicting parties that arresting and confronting him (see Acts 23). Differ from that stance, Paul develops his verbal defence from a certain spatial distance. This has two significances for us: First, to avoid the direct rejection from the opponents. Secondly, to create a possibility for himself to become calm down and from this condition of calm down he can clearly think of the best verbal way to formulated his theological defence and argumentation.

CONCLUSION

Developing a Sense of Humour

Sometimes the serious and critical possibilities of conflict of interpretations, could be overcome not so much by a rational argumentation but only by the intuition of the individual person of the sense of humour. I called this a sense of humour approach. We must be sure that not every thing in this life could be solved rationally by rhetoric and rational argumentation. Sometimes this way can also cause a certain bad feeling in the heart of the counterpart of the dialog or discussion. But a sense of humour, in the meaning of the intuition on the deep heart of a certain person, can become an effective way out for the differences in the presentations of a certain theological topic. There are two well-known legends concerning the historical encounter between Saint Francis of Assisi and Sultan Malik al-Kamil in Damietta, Egypt back in the 13th century. The first is the legend about the Trial by Fire. The second is the legend about the crosses upon the carpet meant to welcome the coming of Saint Francis to the Sultan. We can find the first legend among others in the book of John Tolan, Saint Francis and the Sultan, the Curious History of a Christian-Muslim Encounter (Oxford University Press, 2009). But I will not write more about this legend here. I want to focus on the second legend.

I can detect this kind of intuition of sense of humour in the way of Saint Francis of Assisi deal with the protocol provided by the Sultan Malik Al-Kamil to welcome him. There some versions on the way Sultan welcome Saint Francis. One way is by covering the way to his tent that will be walked on by Francis upon his arriving at the palace of the King. But the problem is that the carpet on the floor is itself full of with the pictures of small crosses. Sultan meant this welcoming ceremony to despise the Christian belief of Francis in which there is also the element of the cross. In other words, the Sultan want to express a “negative” welcoming ceremony to Francis and his friend. But then in a humorous way Francis transform this “bad” intention of the Sultan in using crosses decoration upon the carpet on the floor, into something that can be a source of ultimate joy and even a moment of recreation of a new meaning and interpretation at all.

For me this is an alternative approach to the above issue that is *to develop a sense of humour*. I called it a Franciscan way, a way that has been developed by saint Francis in his encounter with Sultan Malik al-Kamil in Damietta, Egypt. There was a well-known story in the Franciscan tradition on the personal visitation of Saint Francis and his friends to the Sultan Malik al Kamil in Damietta, Egypt. It is told by the Franciscan story teller that to welcome Francis the Sultan provide a red carpet for him but it is full of the pictures of various kinds and forms of crosses. When Francis and his brothers arrived at the Sultan's palace, they do not hesitate at all to walk over the crosses on the red-carpet provided for him to welcome him. Upon seeing that Francis, without hesitation at all walking over the crosses on the carpet, the Sultan said that you have despised the cross. On the astonishment of the Sultan, Francis said that there are three crosses on Calvary. One was surely Christ's cross. The other two were the crosses of the two criminals crucified together with Jesus. Francis goes on saying that the true cross of Christ is already in his heart (as the follower of Jesus Christ). And those crosses on the carpet are only the cross of the criminals. So, this is not a humiliation of Christ's cross at all; this is also not a certain religious belief and practice. This is to express, on the contrary, the fact that Jesus' cross is not destroyed and despised by walking upon the crosses pictured upon the carpet. This surely only a story, but story can also fertilize and nourish some imaginative way of dealing with and confronting the serious issues in the human interpersonal and intercommunal relationship. A sense of humour can also establish and strengthen the human relationship and dialogue in one way of another.

To put all this discourses in a short way let me put forward those following important points. There are many ways to face or confront negative theological discourses and religious hate-speech of others. There is a *polemical way*, meaning to make a counterpart of a similar negative-bad religious theological discourses. This is also known as a confrontative way or apologetical way. But there is a *soft and indirect way*, meaning try to develop a positive-theological discourses of the other in the widest sense of the word. It is also called *the pacifist way of solution*. Here people are not endorsed to develop a frontal confrontation with the negative-bad theological discourses of the other. People are endorsed to avoid conflicts and confrontation and taking the insults and the negative-hate-speech into a personal reflective-meditation. This way can be paralleled with the way of pardon, the way of forgiveness. Here people are endorsed to develop a way of forgetting though it is not always easy to do. People are endorsed to avoid the frontal confrontation. This pattern of ethical attitude was endorsed by Peter. Patricia A. Sharbaugh, once wrote in her short-interesting article on this issue, and I quote her: "The author introduces the hymns with a verse affirming that all Christians are called to be patient when they suffer for doing what is good, because by doing this they are walking in the footsteps of Jesus (1Pet 2:20-21)."¹⁷

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¹⁷ See Patricia A. Sharbaugh, "Acquainted with Grief: A Hymn of Redemptive Love in 1 Peter," in *The Bible Today*, Vol.51, Number 3, May/June 2013, pp.159-164 (esp.161).

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