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To Remember Peacefully: A Christian Perspective of Theology of Remembrance as a Basis of Peaceful Remembrance of Negative Memories

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Abstract

Memory plays an important role in peace building efforts and reconciliation processes. In the modern world, memory is a contesting battleground, where the winner has the merit to write down the story. However, the advancement of technology of memory, and the rise of postmodern philosophy that addresses the importance of alternative memories have contributed to the complexity of the web of memories of the past. How do we deal with contesting memories, and more importantly, how do we heal them? This paper will explore the possibility of a Christian theology of remembrance that serves as a basis of peace-building and reconciliation. Christian worship and theology are based directly on the order to remember. The act of remembering Christ that is being celebrated in the liturgy of the Eucharist is a demanding remembrance. It has a three-fold demand: First, we are asked to remember the suffering as memoria passionis [memory of the suffering of Christ]—as our responsibility towards others; second, we are asked to love our neighbors who come to the table as a consequence of God's command to love; and third, we ask God to remember us, because every time we remember Christ, we are demanding that God remember the Parousia [the coming] as the fulfilment of God's promise. Through these consequences of the remembrance of the past, we are offered a chance of changing the meaning of our painful memories, and instead to remember them peacefully.

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Keywords

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Introduction

Arguments for remembering past atrocities, instead of forgetting them as a way of dealing with and healing memories, have been growing in the last decade. The perception of a growing culture of remembrance has stimulated research on memory and remembering and has pressed for persistent questions about this shift in dealing with past atrocities. The first question that comes to mind is whether remembrance is the right way of dealing with the past. If a memory is too painful to bear, would it not be better to forget it? What good does a memory of the painful past bring? How can we deal with it? What if the past is too painful, so that it seems better to let go of the memory?

Apparently, thanks to the availability of different memories in different forms, the memories of the past are available for us to access. Postmodern philosophy and philosophers have argued for the validity of micro-narratives. The advancement of technology of memory has also contributed to the


The complexity of the web of memories of the past. Media technology has made alternative memories able to challenge the so-called ‘history’. The challenge of our time is, as Volf puts it, how to remember rightly.³

However, remembering the past is also dangerous. Bringing back the painful past can bring the pain back as well. Many choose not to talk about past injuries and are thus choosing the idea of letting go of the past by forgetting it. The most painful things are usually the ones we try to forget because they hurt too much to remember. Remembrance can also lead to retribution or even to vengeance. Unresolved past experiences can come back and haunt us again in the future, and easily lead us to another act of violence. Many stories of violence have happened as a result of unresolved memories. At a communal level, the memory of past conflict that is being transmitted to the next generations can lead to future vengeance. Those generations then share the remembrance of the pain without having to experience what really happened in the past. With the memory of victimization, a group of people can one day choose to take revenge against something that happened to their previous generation. This is why remembrance of past hurt is a risky matter.

Inevitably, memories are remembered in a way that is influenced by age, gender, nationality, and political or religious affiliations of the individual or group remembering. Memory is further colored by the circumstances of those remembering, both in the past (for example whether they experienced occupation, served in the armed forces, were a member of the resistance, or an inmate in a concentration camp or death camp), and in the present.⁴ As a result, different memories are contesting one another.

This brings us to the main questions of this paper: how do we deal with memories of past atrocities, and how does Christian theology offer a way of remembering that brings healing to memories? This paper will propose a Christian theology of remembrance that serves as a basis of peace-building and reconciliation. Through the remembrance of the past, we are offered a chance of changing the meaning of our painful memories, and then of remembering them peacefully.

³ How to remember rightly is the subtitle of the following book: Miroslav Volf, The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2006). It explores the possibility of remembrance as a way of dealing with past hurt.

The Story of Indonesia Communist Massacre after 1965

The case of the 1965 failed communist party coup in Indonesian history is a clear example of the presence of alternative and competing memories. Mary Zurbuchen portrays this correctly:

If Indonesians were to be asked which elements of the past most needed to be aired or explained, some, but by no means all, would point to the events of the 1965–6, which led to perhaps a million deaths and massive detentions of communist party members and ‘sympathizers’ around the country […] Because we have never fully acknowledged the truth of ‘the 1965 incident’, the argument goes, we will not be able either to end impunity or fully recover our common humanity.6

During the time of President Soeharto (1966–1998), the people of Indonesia were taught in history lessons that the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party) is the group that should be held responsible for the murder of the Army’s six generals and one high ranking officer on the eve of September 30th 1965. Soeharto even suggested that the first President of Indonesia, Soekarno, was behind the coup. Every September 30th evening, Indonesian watched a 267 minutes movie that violently depicted how the generals were murdered, since in the past they had only one television station available which was the government owned television, the TVRI (The Television of the Republic of Indonesia). This happened until the fall of Soeharto government in 1998.

However, since Soeharto stepped aside from his presidency, there have been many different stories given as people tried to alter the ‘formal history of 1965’. One of the alternatives includes the suggestion that Soeharto was the one behind the coup. Indonesian history books for high school students clearly picture the uncertainty of this story of the event by saying that there are different versions of the September 30th 1965 communist coup.

Even when historians are arguing about the person behind the coup, one thing remains hidden: the story of the communist massacre that was never fully investigated. After the reformation era began in 1998, freedom of speech was

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implemented. Many writers tried to write new versions of Indonesian history. The Indonesian government formed a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Ind.: Komisi Kebenaran dan Rekonsiliasi), which was weighed down with political interests. The Indonesian Truth and Reconciliation Commission discussed many forgotten cases in Indonesia starting from the communist revolution in 1948 in Madiun to the latest ‘Semanggi Shooting’ in 1999. They were all inconclusive and the recommendations were never implemented. At the end of its implementation, for the sake of political interest and good relationships with the newly independent country of the Republic of East Timor, the commission’s name was changed to the Truth and Friendship Commission (Ind.: Komisi Kebenaran dan Persahabatan). Nothing has been implemented or discussed further about the 1965 case.

Recently, a movie producer Joshua Oppenheimer made an investigation and documentary movie about the violent history of 1965. His 2012 award winning movie, *The Act of Killing*, revealed the memory of the people who were former leaders of death squad, to re-enact their way of killing. They did so without remorse and sometimes even boasted about their acts. The film won more than seventy international awards including a European Film Award (2013) and a BAFTA (2014). Oppenheimer showed that the massacre did take place, and that the people who were involved still remember what happened. Nevertheless, the Indonesian government never really addresses this violent history for a number of reasons such as language barriers, a monopoly on history, cultural preferences, etc.

The important question is, what is the role of Christian theology in dealing with such atrocities in the past, and how do we propose a healing of memory in the public space of forgetting? I think Christian theology of remembrance has something to offer, even in the public space, that remembering with the purpose of healing it, is a better option than forgetting it. Before we come to the proposal of remembering, let us explore the discourse on remembering and forgetting.

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7 More writers are publishing books with the theme of asking people to remember the past such as: Sidarto Danusubroto, *Bicara dengan Sejarah: Damai melalui Rekonsiliasi* [Speaking on History: Peace through Reconciliation] (Jakarta: Multazam Mitra Prima, 2005); Slamet Soetrisno, *Kontroversi dan Rekonstruksi Sejarah* [The Controversy and Reconstruction of History] (Yogyakarta: Media Pressindo, 2006).

8 Danusubroto, *Bicara dengan Sejarah*, pp. 26–76.

The Possibility of Remembering a Negative Memory

How do we remember positively a negative event? Here, I am going to use some philosophical works that support and are relevant to our theological argument of peaceful remembrance. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SED) mentions that there are two major groups of memory. The first group is non-declarative memory. This is the kind of memory where we do not have to declare or seek the truth because it is more of a habit or procedure. In this case, we have skill memory, which is the remembrance of how to drive, play a guitar or run because it is our procedural habit and constitutes skill memory. We also remember facts that happened, for instance our birthday, or our graduation day, and that is called propositional memory.

The second group is the declarative memory, where we seek to find the truth about the event that we experienced. This declarative memory includes semantic memory which is the memory or facts that are related to conceptual information underlying our general knowledge of the world, for example, the apartheid system in South Africa. Another memory that belongs to declarative memory is re-collective memory or episodic memory, which is memory of experiences, events and episodes, such as the conversation you had, or an argument, or feelings about something that happened to you. Declarative memory demands that we find out what really happened; it needs facts, while non-declarative memory does not really represent the past.

Declarative memory is considered as a basic need in order to have a sense of oneself. This form of memory functions to maintain a hold on one’s identity. One can barely live without this type of memory. Remembrance in this form of memory is thus an active and dynamic act of the mind. What we study in more depth in this research paper is the declarative form of remembrance, especially in the case of communal conflict.

The memory of an event is different from the memory of the emotions regarding it. A person can remember what happened during a rock concert: who sang, where the concert was, how many people attended the concert, etc. and can recall the memory ten years later. Meanwhile your emotions toward the concert can change. You could be happy at the time of the concert because you were there with your loved one, but a few years later you can remember that you were happy without necessarily feeling the happiness. Sometimes, you can also try to forget the memory of happiness when you are not with the person

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anymore. The memory of happiness can also bring sadness. While the memory of the event stays the same, the emotion changes.

In the construction of memory and identity, the memory of the emotion can also be passed on. A community needs emotions to strengthen the bond between individuals. It is often the memory of the emotion that brings individuals together instead of the memory of the event. A group of people who have played in a band together will be bonded because of the shared memory of the emotion instead of the event. They feel connected because of the memory of tears and joy of the concert gig instead of the actual concert. In ten years, they can still remember how happy they were as a band while they have already forgotten the details of how they played. It shows that the relation between memory of an event and memory of the emotion is dynamic.

The past that is being remembered in a community is formed as a collective memory. When the past is remembered only as a painful memory, it becomes a negative force for the present and the future. A negative remembrance is a memory of the painful past that is still being remembered as only pain and hurt. Identity as an unacknowledged victim keeps making its mark even when those who inherit the memory are not the actual victims anymore. Such communities then still remember the past pain and injustice, and identify themselves as the victims. Negative remembrance can lead a group that considers itself as the victims to keep identifying the heirs of the offending group as being perpetrators themselves. The danger of negative remembrance is that it perpetuates open wounds without hope for healing.

If there is a story of conflict when people experienced negative emotion, they can transfer not only the memory of the negative event but also the memory of the negative emotion. What we would like to achieve is the way to remember the negative event for the sake of the future and the victims, yet transform the negative emotion, or changed the attitude toward the memory of the negative emotion. If we can do this, then the memory of an event is open for a new meaning, based on how the groups involved perceive what is past. When a new meaning is attached to the memories of the events, then the possibility of being a reconciled community becomes bigger. The change of meaning of the memory of the emotion opens the possibility of a more redemptive memory, even if it is a resolution of ‘never again!’ Redemptive memory comes from a more positive framework for the remembrance of painful past where the pain—or shame, or injustice—is being remembered without inheriting the actual pain that was inflicted.

In the case of the 1965 communist massacre, if we are able to find or offer a way of redeeming the memory of past hurt, than it might be possible to start
remembering what had happened. Before achieving this, Christian community must be able to construct a convincing theology of remembrance, and offer it to the public space as a way of social reconciliation in Indonesia.

**Biblical Understanding of Remembrance**

The next challenge is what does Christian theology say about remembrance? The Bible is in itself a book of remembrance. It is a book that consists of the memories of people who encountered God in their life experiences, and who were inspired to tell their stories and write them down to pass them on to the next generations.

Remembrance has very strong biblical roots. The idea of remembrance in biblical understanding is always more than just a passive psychological understanding of recalling something back in one’s mind. The term ‘remember’ is often followed by an action, both by God or Israel. The order to remember is a strong theme in the Old and the New Testament, and is used to remember the core of the tradition which is God’s saving action towards God’s people. In connection with the sin and guilt, God also remembers what happened in the past and when God remembers it is usually connected with consequences.  

When past wrongs are not remembered anymore, it means that Israel is not being punished any longer and it does not necessarily mean that God does not remember the actual event.

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11 There are several examples of God’s remembrance that are connected with consequences such as the book of Hosea and several texts within the book of Hosea where it is clearly stated that God remember sins. In at least four passages in Hosea God is said to remember the evil deeds of Israel. Hosea says, “but they do not realize that I remember all their evil deeds. Their sins engulf them; they are always before me” (Hos. 7:2). This could mean that Ephraim’s guilt is not hidden; God watched it all. When Israel did not remember the covenant, God remembered their sin. God set eyes on all our sins and misdeeds and remembers them. Malachi says that God put the records of his people in the book of remembrance (Mal. 3:16). Then Nehemiah tells that Israel remembers and acknowledges their sins (Neh. 9). Israel was rebuked for not remembering the redemptive action of God in the past. After the warning by the prophet, Israel confessed its sin and remembers all its iniquities and ask for God to remember the covenant which means to stop the punishment. Lastly, the text of Jeremiah is an often noted text on the topic of forgiveness of sins, where forgiveness is connected with remembrance (Jer. 31:34). However, what not to remember sins means that God does not punish the people anymore meanwhile still putting their trespasses into God’s memory.
The order to remember is lived out by the Israelites. Israel remembers what God has done for them in their life, especially their covenant with the Lord. God commands Israel to teach and remember the knowledge of faith ‘when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up’ (Deut. 11:19). The remembrance that Israel is told to practice is to live by the Torah obediently every day.

Israel has preserved its social memory mostly in the form of an oral tradition. The whole community acts as a web of memories, trying to understand what had happened together, finding out what it means for their context in the discourse in the society, while preserving the originality of the story.12

What Israel remembers is not the same as what modern humans understand as history. Israel is bound to her history in a completely different way. Von Rad says, ‘For Israel that interest was not a thirst for knowledge that happened to be concentrated in history; for in history, as nearly every page of the Old Testament affirms, Israel encountered her God’.13 The calling Israel received is not a one-time encounter; rather, it comes about to every generation of Israel. Von Rad concludes that the Old Testament to a great extent is ‘nothing but the literary record of a people’s passionate millennium-long conversation about the meaning of its history’.14 Therefore, the command to ‘remember’ for Israel is always related with her encounter with God: that it always changes and is renewed through the generations. The Old Testament is Israel’s testimony of their encounter with God. Israel is committed to talk about this ‘remembrance’ in no particular method or manner. Remembrance is within the theology of Israel.


14 Von Rad, God at Work in Israel, p. 13.
The sharing of past events does not mean that they will remain in the past. Each event becomes actual for each subsequent generation. Von Rad says:

This is not just in the sense of furnishing the imagination with a vivid present picture of the past events—no, it was only the community assembled for a festival that by recitation and ritual brought Israel in the full sense of the world into being: in her own person she really and truly entered into the historic situation to which the festival in question was related.15

The celebrated ritual was in reality an actual event by the saving God who encounters Israel through generations. The past events are taken and experienced as her history through time.

Israel’s understanding of history is centered in God saving action. Thus, Israel always renews its history through generations in the sense of experiencing the past event with a new meaning. Each event becomes history because Israel feels the saving action of God on its own terms in each subsequent generation.

The call to remember in the New Testament has the same active meaning with the Old Testament. The main word that is used for remembrance in the New Testament is \textit{anamnesis} which means ‘remembrance’ or ‘recollection’.16 In the New Testament, the order to remember demands a certain action.17 God remembers certain persons and turns to them in grace and mercy. In the New Testament, this word has more meaning than just a mental process of bringing something back into the mind. In some usage, recollection can also strike someone (Mt. 5:23), or it may constantly accompany him or her (1 Cor. 11:2). The book of Hebrews also notes that God who thinks on humankind means that God is with a person, but can also withdraw from him or her (Heb. 2:5–8). \textit{The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament} notes, ‘Every event on earth has

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its effect on God. His remembrance is concealed in His acts of grace and judgment. The fact that God remembers is revealed by the word of His messengers’.18

The remembrance of Jesus’ words lives on even when Jesus has already been resurrected. Johannine remembrance suggests that Jesus’ words and teachings were only remembered, perceived and believed by the disciples after the resurrection (Jn. 2:22; Jn. 12:16). The apostolic teaching also demands recollection. Paul for instance demanded that Timothy carry on the tradition of remembrance in the way Paul teaches to every congregation (1 Cor. 4:17).

It is worthwhile to note here what anamnesis means in the liturgy, since anamnesis is used variously in worship. In the Dictionary of Worship, anamnesis is considered untranslatable. Words such as memorial, commemoration, and remembrance suggest that the person or deed commemorated is past and absent, whereas anamnesis means exactly the opposite: ‘it is an objective act, in and by which the person or event commemorated is actually made present, is brought into the realm of the here and now’.19 Anamnesis means that the event of the past celebrated is actually re-lived and re-experienced in a new realm. Just like most of the use of זכר (zākhar: remember) in the Old Testament, the meaning of anamnesis contains an active action of remembrance. It is not merely recalling something back into the mind; rather it expresses the past event in a present reality.

There are two main ideas that we can gain from the biblical understanding of remembrance. First, biblical theology speaks about the order to remember, even if it is negative remembrance, because memory gives a sense of identity as God’s chosen people. Negative and positive events are remembered as part of the story of how Israel encountered God. Second, to remember is not a passive verb, but it denotes an action. The biblical communities are asked to act upon this order of remembrance. This conclusion shows us that biblical theology is all about remembering and giving meaning to the memories.

Dangerous Memory

Johann Baptist Metz, a Catholic theologian, reminds us that the remembrance in the Eucharist also means to remember the suffering of Christ (memoria passionis) and not only the memory of a triumphant Christ (memoria resurrectionis [memory of the resurrected Christ]). Metz builds his concept of memory

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on three basic elements: memory as a way of knowing God; memory that demands your action (dangerous); and memory as rooted in the Christian memory of the life of Jesus. Matthiesen compares Metz’s ideas with Wiesel and found similarities in their ideas of memory. These three basic elements are supported by the two notions of ‘narrative’ as a way of preserving the memories and of ‘solidarity’ as a result of the memories that are being shared. When these elements are combined, memory is a strong resource for doing theology. In fact Metz says that Christian theology becomes theological because, ‘it tries to preserve the dangerous memory of the messianic God, the God of the resurrection of the dead and judgment’.22

Christianity has a memory that is shaped by a historical remembrance and yet still provides truth and solidarity to those who suffer. This is a memory that gives hope through remembrance and narrative. Metz explains this memory and gives the theological foundation for it:

The Church must understand and justify itself as the public witness and bearer of the tradition of a dangerous memory of freedom in the ‘systems’ of our emancipative society. This thesis is based on memory as the fundamental form of expression of Christian faith and on the central and special importance of freedom in that faith. In faith, Christians accomplish the memoria passionis, mortis et resurrectionis Jesu Christi [remembrance of the passion, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ]. In faith, they remember the testament of Christ’s love, in which the Kingdom of God appeared among men by initially establishing that kingdom between men, by Jesus’ confession of himself as the one who was on the side of the oppressed and rejected and by his proclamation of the coming kingdom of God as the liberating power of unconditional love [...]. It is therefore a dangerous and at the same time liberating memory that oppresses and questions the present because it reminds us not of some open future, but precisely this future and because it compels Christians constantly to change themselves so that they are able to take this future into account.23

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23 Metz, Faith in History and Society, pp. 89–90.
Dangerous memory is the memory that asks us to remember suffering and act upon it. Christianity’s dangerous memory plays an important role in the development of Metz’s theology. He thinks that this kind of memory:

[...] can have a very decisive ecclesiological importance in defining the Church as the public vehicle transmitting a dangerous memory in the systems of social life; memory is of importance in our dynamic understanding of dogmatic faith; it is the basic concept in a theological theory of history and society as such and at the same time the basic concept of a theology in the age of criticism as a category of the salvation of identity.24

This concept of dangerous memory also provides us with an ecclesiological basis for the Church.

Dangerous memory is a significant foundation in political theology as fundamental theology. However, the memory will not become involved directly in a socio-political sense. The memory of suffering that Metz uses will serve as a basis of theological action. Metz says, ‘Memory of suffering, in the Christian sense, does not merge with the darkness of social and political arbitraries, but creates a social and political conscience in the interest of another’s suffering. It prevents the privatization and internalization of suffering and the reduction of its social and political dimension’.25 The memory of suffering will not be used as a political agenda; rather it is used as a guideline for the heart in political actions.

Memory can be dangerous because we are disconnected from the history of the winners and we are enabled to think about the past experiences and reflect on it. It is a sort of self-realization of the present by looking at the past and then deciding what step to take for the future. It is a chance of stepping back from the stability of society and looking into what happened in a broader view. This action could lead to a revolt against what is happening in the present. It could evoke a feeling of discomfort and thus it is dangerous for the stability of the present.

Metz believes that there should be no memoria resurrectionis that is separated from memoria passionis. Therefore the memory of suffering is not a solution; rather, ‘The Christian memory of suffering is in its theological implications an anticipatory memory: it intends the anticipation of a particular future of man

24 Metz, Faith in History and Society, p. 184.
as a future for the suffering, the hopeless, the oppressed, the injured and the useless of the earth’.26

This solidarity that brings hope is also about remembering God. Metz says, ‘The stories of setting out and hope, stories of suffering and persecution, stories of resistance and resignation, are at the center of the Christian understanding of God. Remembering and telling are, therefore, not just for entertainment; they are basic forms of Christian language about God’.27 Thus, solidarity that is coming from the memory of God is also an action of telling the story about God.

Our eschatological hope and solidarity in God will not allow us to be individualistic. We have to be one with others in the memory of suffering. In later years, Metz also stressed the importance of remembrance of the suffering of others. We have to emphasize the remembrance of other’s suffering and not that of ours alone.

**Dangerous Love**

Remembrance, especially to remember the suffering, is a continuation of God’s love and the order to love. Here, I find that Søren Kierkegaard’s explanation of love is helpful to convince us that to remember is also an act of love.

Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher and theologian, wrote his *Works of Love* as the result of his exploration of God’s love and the word ‘kærligheid’ [love] and ‘Elskov’ [erotic love]. He said, to love is a command (Mt. 22:37–40).28 This is his basic assumption. We are all called to love. Love does not come automatically in our heart. Automatic love is another form of self-love, where we love only those we want to love according to our preference. Kierkegaard thinks that we love others because it is God’s command. Without it, human can only know selfish love. A selfish love will leave love when it does not seem beneficial anymore.29 The command ‘You shall love […]’ is the basis of our love.

Who is our neighbor? Our neighbor is everyone around us. They are the ones who need help, or in other words, who suffer. Our neighbor is not our family and closest ones, because we choose them to be our neighbor, and

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26 Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, p. 117.
we demand something in return from them. Meanwhile, love of neighbor is self-denying love where the other’s needs are more important than our own needs.\textsuperscript{30} He says, ‘Love to one’s neighbour is therefore eternal equality in loving, but this eternal equality is the opposite of exclusive love or preference.’\textsuperscript{31} The command to love also asks us to love our enemy.\textsuperscript{32} The command to love others is risky and dangerous. Jesus was crucified because of this love. Love demands sacrifices, self-denial, and the strength to withstand suffering. Above all, we have to do it with a pure heart.\textsuperscript{33} Love that demands and asks for unconditional action to help others is a dangerous love.

Why do we have to do it? Why must we love our neighbor? Kierkegaard says that we have to love because we are in debt to God. For God has loved humanity so much that we are now in debt to this love. Kierkegaard thinks that everyone who is loved is in debt, and therefore, ‘precisely for this reason we say that it is the Christian’s duty: to be in the debt of love to one another’.\textsuperscript{34}

True love will never feel disappointed or shamed because true love does not demand something in return. We love purely because we are loved by God. Love will hide sins and transgressions and enable us to come to forgiveness. Kierkegaard thinks that this command to love should be implemented through help for others who are our neighbors.

This idea may seems a bit too radical, but nevertheless, important. We love and remember the suffering of our neighbor because God has loved us first. In remembering, we are giving love and at the same time doing justice to the victims. Justice does not mean retribution in a judicial system. The judicial system still needs to do its work in its own form. Remembrance helps victims because it is a chance that can be offered to victims and perpetrators—mostly victims—for their stories to be loved, heard, acknowledged, and to have the opportunity for a healing of memory. By listening to the voices of the voiceless and remembering them, we are bringing justice to the victims.

Coming back to the story of the 1965 massacre, the calling to love our neighbor and to bring justice by remembering their story as our neighbor in need is one of the callings of Christian communities in Indonesia. Kierkegaard helps us to see the need to speak on the issue of injustice and violent past to show our love towards our neighbor, the ones who are suppressed and victimized.

\textsuperscript{30} Kierkegaard, \textit{The Works of Love}, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{31} Kierkegaard, \textit{The Works of Love}, p. 70.
\textsuperscript{32} Kierkegaard, \textit{The Works of Love}, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{33} Kierkegaard, \textit{The Works of Love}, p. 196.
Transformed Memory in the Liturgy of the Eucharist

Liturgy as an act of remembrance can be seen fully in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is a memorial of the life of Jesus Christ. It is not only a recalling of something that happened in the past, but it is the re-actualization of the event for the present. This is the mystery that exists and is comes into effect in liturgy: a transformation of past events into our present. Paul says in Romans (Rom. 16:25–7):

Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him—to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

The phrase ‘revelation of the mystery’ refers to the link between past and present. It also shows the revelation of God’s plan in Christ. Geoffrey Wainwright, a Protestant theologian and liturgist says, ‘Mystery here denotes the divine purpose and plan to bring human beings to salvation, which has now been brought to light as never before through its embodiment in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son’.35

Remembrance in liturgy is mainly referring to the word anamnesis [remember] that Jesus instituted during the last supper with the disciples. As words of institution that were instituted by Jesus himself, what does eis tēn emēn anamnēsin [in remembrance of me] mean and what does they mean for the church? Max Thurian takes the phrase eis tēn emēn anamnēsin with the meaning ‘with a view to my memorial, in memorial of me, as the memorial of me’.36 Further he says that this memorial is not a simple subjective act of recollection; it is actually a liturgical action. Nevertheless, it is not just a mere liturgical action which makes the Lord present; it is a liturgical action which recalls the memorial before the Father concerning the unique sacrifice of the Son, and this makes Him present in His memorial, in his presentation of his sacrifice before the Father and in His intercession as heavenly High Priest. Thurian says,

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‘The eucharistic memorial is a recalling to us, a recalling by us to the Father and a proclamation by the Church; it is a thanksgiving and intercession of Christ for the Church’. Thurian continues by concluding what the Bible means by memorial:

[...] to recall before God what he has already done for his people so that he may grant us today all the benefits thereof. The memorial is the actualization of the work of God and at the same time it is the recalling in prayer to the Father of what he has done, in order that he may continue his work today.38

The Eucharist is the event where Christ’s death is remembered, where in his self-emptying action, God takes form in a people who have suffered.39 Jesus said, ‘Do this in remembrance of me!’ (Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:26). What is the meaning of remembering Christ’s death? The Eucharist is an act of active remembrance in liturgy, for Jesus has given his very being for humanity. This act of remembrance is ‘guided by the power of the Spirit and focuses on the location of the memory of Christ within the memory of a people, and the memory of the people within the memory of Christ’s kenosis’ [emptying].40 The past has become the present for the future through the Eucharist. Therefore, the remembrance in the Eucharist does not mean a passive remembrance of the past, but it is also a recalling of the present for the future through the memorial of Christ. Memorial celebration in the Eucharist is not only about the past, but also very much connects the community of believers to the future. Wainwright firmly connects the Eucharist with this eschatological aspect. He shows from the early Eucharistic prayers and liturgy that eschatology was never far from the minds of the first congregation when they celebrated the Eucharist. They believed and expected the return of Jesus Christ in the anamnesis of Jesus Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist.41 The celebration of the meal would be repeated until the return of Christ. The remembrance of Jesus is kept with the expectation of hope in the Kingdom of God.

37 Thurian, The Eucharistic Memorial, p. 35.
38 Thurian, The Eucharistic Memorial, p. 94.
When it is connected with the expectation of the future, the Eucharist reminds us that Christ will come as both Savior and Judge.\textsuperscript{42} Thus, even when we are remembering the future, we are also being reminded that ‘the Christian’s baptismal incorporation into Christ breaks through: present judgment by the Lord (vv. 29–32a) is a gracious chastisement (v. 32a), whose purpose is to (bring us to repentance and so) save us from final condemnation (v.32b).’\textsuperscript{43} This is why Wainwright mentions the early liturgies that ‘made this connection of Parousia and the final judgment at the end of the institution narrative and the anamnesis.’\textsuperscript{44} Thus even when the Eucharistic liturgy is celebrated to remember the whole story of Jesus in the past, it has a very strong expectation of the future in the Parousia, and the judgment that Christ then will bring.

Why is the expectation of the future that comes from the remembrance of the past so relevant? In the Eucharist, believers are given the promise of ‘righteousness, peace, and joy’ and as a consequence,

> The Eucharistic community will act in the world in such ways as to display the righteousness, peace and joy of the kingdom, and so it will bear witness to the giver of these gifts, cooperating in the establishment of the kingdom without ever thought of denying that the work is entirely God’s and will be drastically completed by Him.\textsuperscript{45}

As a witness of God’s work, the Eucharist asks the community to do the work of God in their lives, and —importantly— not only for the sake of the gathered community, but also for the sake of the whole world.\textsuperscript{46} Wainwright sees that the Eucharist demands that the community pay attention to their context and act upon God’s words to them. It shows that the eschatological character of the Eucharist points to the future, and that God wants the recipient of this celebration to be responsible for their historical context yet to come. The demand to remember the past and at the same time the future can transform our ways of dealing with the present.

The memory in liturgical commemoration in the Eucharist is not only about the past; it transforms our present, and it also contains hope for the future. When the memory of the past transforms our present it means that it influences the reaction of the church towards what is happening around it. This

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{42} Wainwright, \textit{Eucharist and Eschatology}, p. 82.
  \item \textsuperscript{43} Wainwright, \textit{Eucharist and Eschatology}, p. 83.
  \item \textsuperscript{44} Wainwright, \textit{Eucharist and Eschatology}, p. 84.
  \item \textsuperscript{45} Wainwright, \textit{Eucharist and Eschatology}, p. 148.
  \item \textsuperscript{46} John D. Zizioulas, \textit{Communion and Otherness} (New York: T&T Clark, 2006).
\end{itemize}
encourages action of churches who are dealing with past conflict, or members that have traumatic past. Liturgical commemorations will lead to transformation and hope for the future.

To Remember Peacefully

The place of transformative remembrance in the Christian tradition is in the liturgy of the Eucharist. In the liturgy of the Eucharist we remember the suffering. In communal conflict, the pain of shame and regret for wrongdoing that cannot be undone means that perpetrators recognize that they are in need of healing and a forgiveness for actions that can only come by unmerited grace. The actuality of the Eucharist invites and embraces everybody to come together as one. The Eucharist offers a safe place to let go of negative memory towards people who don’t want to remember the past because it is too painful. At the same time, the Eucharist also offers a place of remembrance where memory of the past will not be lost.

With this idea of a peaceful remembrance, Indonesian churches in particular, and Christian communities in general, can opt to become agents of remembrance as a responsibility of loving our neighbor. The story of the 1965 massacre is obviously still remembered by the victims and perpetrators, but is kept silent. The church need to think of her calling to love and voice the memory of the victims, to help not only the victims, but also the nation, to have a healed memory.

Of course there is the fear of retaliation if the past is brought back. However, in the new culture of remembrance, memory will most likely stay entrapped. In the public space, Christian remembrance can offer a new redemptive way of remembering. The Eucharistic redemptive memory gives us fresh hope that our remembrance of the past will not be negative. It encourages us to remember and deal with our past. When past hurt is being remembered, it will be transformed into a redemptive memory of God’s remembrance.

In order to be able to remember the past, the Eucharist gives us the assurance that we don’t have to have to hold on to the memories; nor do such memories have a hold on us. It is the memory of God who remembers us in Christ that is the formative memory for our lives. The community of believers will remember and bring their lives to Christ in the Eucharist. Victims and perpetrators are invited to first remember and then bring their memory to God. When personal hurts are brought to the presence of God in the memory of the Eucharist, it becomes the memory of the community. Personal stories become the story of the community, thus giving the assurance that the personal
memory of the past hurt becomes that of the community. To know that one does not have to endure the burden of remembering the past alone is a liberating experience. The Eucharist is the place of daring, to let the bad memory and the pain be held in God’s presence, with the hope of healing the memory.

Forgiveness is another element that needs to happen around the table so that the memory of the event can be preserved with a different meaning. The past is still there, the story is still there, yet personal remembrance can diminish when the person realizes that the community has remembered their pain. Then the memory is not only a memory of pain, in fact it is on the way to being transformed into a memory of healing for both victims and perpetrators. This way, we can remember peacefully.