



Transformative Theology: A New Living Christian in Religious Moderation

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ABSTRACT

Religious moderation is a critical discourse in contemporary theology, particularly in addressing issues of intolerance, exclusivism, and extremism. Christianity, with its emphasis on love, peace, and reconciliation, has the potential to promote religious harmony through a transformative theological approach. Transformative theology, which is dynamic and contextually relevant, advocates for inclusivity, dialogue, and ethical engagement in religiously diverse societies. This study explores how transformative theology fosters religious moderation by balancing doctrinal faithfulness with the imperative of peaceful coexistence. This research employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing theological analysis and literature review. Theological analysis examines biblical principles and doctrines related to interfaith engagement, while the literature review incorporates perspectives from academic sources on religious tolerance, Christian ethics, and peacebuilding. Case studies of Christian communities engaged in interfaith dialogue provide practical insights into the implementation of transformative theology in promoting religious harmony. Thematic analysis identifies key principles within transformative theology that contribute to religious moderation, such as contextual interpretation, interfaith collaboration, and ethical responsibility. Findings indicate that transformative theology plays a vital role in promoting religious moderation by encouraging contextual theological interpretation, fostering interfaith dialogue, and advocating ethical engagement. Contextual theology enables Christians to interpret their faith in ways that resonate with contemporary realities, preventing rigid dogmatism. Interfaith dialogue facilitates mutual understanding, while ethical engagement ensures that faith is expressed through actions promoting social justice and peace. Case studies reveal that Christian communities that adopt transformative theology are more successful in fostering interreligious cooperation and mitigating religious tensions. This study concludes that transformative theology is essential for Christian engagement in religiously plural societies. By integrating scriptural faithfulness with inclusivity, dialogue, and ethical action, it provides a theological framework for religious moderation.

Keywords: *Transformative Theology; Christian; Religious Moderation*

INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation has become an essential discourse in contemporary theology as societies face increasing challenges related to religious intolerance, exclusivism, and extremism (Barnes, 2012). In many parts of the world, religious identity is often politicized, leading to divisions, conflicts, and social tensions. In such a context, the role of theology in promoting peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding among different religious communities has become more critical than ever. Christianity, as a faith that upholds the principles of love, peace, and reconciliation, has a profound potential to contribute to religious harmony. However, this requires a transformative theological approach, one that is dynamic, contextually relevant, and open to engagement with religious diversity.

Transformative theology is not merely a static interpretation of religious doctrines but an evolving understanding that interacts with contemporary realities. It acknowledges that theology must adapt to the ever-changing social, political, and cultural contexts while remaining faithful to its core biblical principles. This approach is particularly significant in addressing issues of religious moderation, as it emphasizes dialogue, inclusivity, and the ethical responsibility of Christians to be peacemakers in their communities. In contrast to rigid dogmatism or exclusivist attitudes that often breed sectarianism, transformative theology calls for a faith that is active, reflective, and willing to embrace the complexities of pluralistic societies (Albayrak, 2016). In many religious settings, the failure to embrace a transformative theological approach has led to the misinterpretation of sacred texts, often resulting in justifications for discrimination, intolerance, and violence. While Christianity teaches love and compassion, history has shown that misinterpretations of scripture have at times been used to support colonialism, racism, and religious oppression. This highlights the urgent need for a theological paradigm that is not only biblically sound but also ethically responsible in fostering peaceful relations with people of other faiths. Transformative theology seeks to reinterpret Christian teachings in a way that aligns with the principles of justice, mercy, and humility, ensuring that religious faith is a force for unity rather than division.

One of the central aspects of transformative theology is its emphasis on contextualization. Theological interpretations should not be detached from the realities faced by believers in their daily lives. In societies marked by religious diversity, the church is called to be a bridge-builder, promoting mutual respect and understanding between different faith communities. This requires theological education that prioritizes interfaith dialogue, conflict resolution, and active engagement in social justice issues. A Christian faith that is deeply rooted in scripture yet open to constructive engagement with religious diversity will foster a spirituality that is both authentic and inclusive. Moreover, religious moderation, as advocated by transformative theology, does not imply theological compromise or relativism. Instead, it seeks to balance faithfulness to Christian doctrine with the ethical imperative to respect and love one's neighbors, regardless of their religious background. Jesus himself demonstrated this approach through his interactions with individuals from different social and religious groups, such as the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-26) and the Roman centurion (Matthew 8:5-13). His ministry exemplified a

radical inclusivity that broke societal and religious barriers, setting a model for how Christians today should engage with people of other faiths.

In the contemporary era, where religious intolerance continues to manifest in various forms, from hate speech to violent extremism, Christians are called to be proactive agents of peace. The challenge lies in ensuring that theological teachings and church practices align with this calling. Many Christian communities still struggle with exclusivist tendencies that hinder constructive engagement with religious others. Transformative theology provides a framework for overcoming these challenges by advocating for a faith that is both deeply rooted in Christian convictions and open to meaningful interfaith interactions (Rahner, 1982). In addition to theological discourse, practical steps must be taken to implement transformative theology within Christian communities. This includes promoting theological education that incorporates interreligious studies, encouraging grassroots initiatives that foster interfaith collaboration, and developing pastoral strategies that equip believers to be ambassadors of peace (Hedges, 2010). Churches and theological institutions have a significant role in shaping the attitudes of believers towards religious diversity. By embracing transformative theology, they can cultivate a Christian identity that is both spiritually robust and socially responsible.

The concept of religious moderation is not only relevant within interfaith contexts but also within intra-Christian dynamics. Denominational conflicts and doctrinal disputes have historically caused divisions within Christianity itself. A transformative theological approach encourages ecumenical dialogue, seeking unity in diversity rather than division over theological differences (Phan, 2004). This is crucial in strengthening the Christian witness in a world that often perceives religion as a source of conflict rather than reconciliation. This paper seeks to explore how transformative theology can serve as a guiding principle for Christians in practicing their faith while fostering religious moderation. By examining biblical, theological, and practical dimensions of transformative theology, this study aims to provide insights into how Christianity can contribute to a more harmonious and inclusive religious landscape. In doing so, it will highlight the importance of rethinking theological approaches in a way that resonates with contemporary challenges while remaining faithful to the essence of the Christian gospel. As the world continues to navigate religious complexities, the call for a living, transformative theology becomes increasingly urgent. A theology that is passive and disconnected from real-world issues will struggle to address the pressing concerns of religious intolerance and extremism. Therefore, Christian theology must evolve in a manner that upholds its doctrinal truths while being relevant to the realities of a pluralistic society (MacLaren, 2018). Only by doing so can Christianity truly embody its calling to be a beacon of love, peace, and reconciliation in the midst of religious diversity.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach to explore the role of transformative theology in fostering religious moderation. Qualitative research is particularly suitable for theological studies as it allows for an in-depth exploration of concepts, interpretations, and lived experiences. By utilizing theological analysis and literature review, this study examines the ways in which transformative theology shapes Christian engagement in

interfaith dialogue and contributes to peaceful coexistence. The primary method used in this research is theological analysis, which involves critically examining theological concepts, doctrines, and interpretations within the framework of transformative theology. This approach enables a deeper understanding of how Christian theology can be contextualized to promote religious harmony. By analyzing theological texts, this study identifies recurring themes, theological arguments, and scriptural foundations that support an inclusive and peace-oriented Christian perspective. Additionally, theological analysis allows for a comparison of different theological traditions and their approaches to religious moderation, highlighting both similarities and differences in Christian thought across denominations (Bevans, 2002).

In addition to theological analysis, this study incorporates a literature review as a key methodological tool. Data were gathered from academic journals, books, and case studies that focus on transformative theology, religious moderation, and interfaith relations. The literature review helps establish a theoretical foundation for the study, drawing from existing scholarship on religious tolerance, Christian ethics, and the role of faith communities in promoting peace. By engaging with diverse sources, this study ensures a comprehensive examination of the topic, integrating perspectives from both historical and contemporary theological discourse. One of the critical aspects of this research is the use of case studies to illustrate the practical application of transformative theology in real-world contexts. Case studies of Christian communities actively involved in interfaith dialogue provide valuable insights into how theological principles are implemented in practice. These case studies include examples of churches, faith-based organizations, and Christian leaders who have successfully fostered religious moderation through education, community engagement, and interreligious collaboration. By analyzing these cases, this study identifies patterns, challenges, and best practices that can inform future efforts in promoting religious harmony. To analyze the collected data, this study employs thematic analysis, a qualitative method that identifies key themes and patterns within theological texts and case study findings. Thematic analysis allows for the categorization of concepts related to transformative theology and religious moderation, enabling a structured examination of how theological principles translate into practice. Through this method, the study highlights the core elements of transformative theology that contribute to religious coexistence, such as inclusivity, contextual adaptation, and scriptural reinterpretation. By combining theological analysis, literature review, and case study examination, this research offers a holistic perspective on the intersection of Christianity and religious moderation. The qualitative approach allows for a nuanced exploration of theological concepts while also emphasizing their practical implications in interfaith settings. Through this methodology, the study seeks to provide a meaningful contribution to contemporary discussions on how Christian theology can serve as a guiding force for peace, tolerance, and religious harmony in a pluralistic world.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis reveals that transformative theology plays a crucial role in supporting religious moderation by providing a theological framework that encourages contextual interpretation, interfaith dialogue, ethical engagement, and spiritual humility. These

aspects enable Christians to navigate religious diversity with openness and respect while maintaining a strong spiritual identity (Smith, 1991).

One of the foundational principles of transformative theology is contextual theological interpretation, which emphasizes the importance of understanding scripture and doctrine within contemporary social and cultural realities. This approach moves beyond a rigid, literalist reading of biblical texts and instead seeks to apply theological principles in ways that are relevant to modern life. By embracing contextual theology, Christians can interpret their faith in ways that promote inclusivity and adaptability. In diverse societies, where religious pluralism is a reality, such an interpretative approach prevents dogmatism and allows for meaningful engagement with other traditions (Dupuis, 1997). When Christian communities understand that theological concepts should be interpreted in light of historical, cultural, and social contexts, they become more open to dialogue and cooperation with individuals of different faith backgrounds. This flexibility helps prevent religious exclusivism, which often leads to intolerance and conflict. Transformative theology, therefore, serves as a bridge between tradition and modernity, allowing faith to be dynamic and responsive to contemporary challenges (Swidler, 2013).

Furthermore, interfaith dialogue and cooperation emerge as essential components of religious moderation within transformative theology. Engaging in meaningful conversations with followers of other faiths fosters mutual understanding and dismantles stereotypes that often fuel religious tensions. Transformative theology encourages Christians to see interfaith engagement not as a threat to their beliefs but as an opportunity to deepen their understanding of both their own faith and that of others. Many Christian traditions already recognize shared moral and ethical values with other religions, such as compassion, justice, and the pursuit of peace (Knitter, 2013). When Christians actively participate in interfaith discussions, they contribute to an environment of coexistence rather than confrontation. Moreover, interfaith cooperation in addressing societal challenges, such as poverty, education, and humanitarian aid, demonstrates that religious differences do not have to be barriers to collective action. Instead, they can serve as catalysts for unity, fostering a sense of shared responsibility in improving the world.

Beyond dialogue, transformative theology also calls for ethical and social engagement, recognizing that faith must be expressed through tangible actions that contribute to the well-being of society. Christianity's transformative nature is evident in its call for active involvement in social justice initiatives, such as poverty alleviation, human rights advocacy, and environmental stewardship. A commitment to religious moderation is reflected in how Christians engage with broader societal issues alongside people of different religious backgrounds. When Christian communities work collaboratively with Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and adherents of other faiths to address global concerns, they break down prejudices and build trust. This ethical engagement is rooted in Jesus' teachings, which emphasize care for the marginalized and the pursuit of justice. Theological reflection on social issues highlights that faith is not merely about personal salvation but also about contributing to the common good. Through this perspective, transformative theology reinforces the idea that religious identity should not lead to isolationism but rather to active participation in creating a just and harmonious society.

Another critical aspect of transformative theology in religious moderation is the development of spiritual identity and humility. Many perceive religious moderation as a dilution of faith or a compromise of theological integrity. However, transformative theology challenges this notion by presenting moderation as a deepening of faith rather than a weakening of it. Religious moderation is not about relativism but about embracing the spiritual maturity that allows believers to coexist with others without fear or hostility. Transformative theology teaches that humility is essential to a robust faith, one that acknowledges the limitations of human understanding and the infinite wisdom of God. This perspective encourages Christians to approach religious diversity with a sense of respect rather than superiority (Hick, 2005). Jesus himself exemplified this humility, engaging with people from different backgrounds with compassion and openness. By following this example, Christians can maintain their theological convictions while also embracing the idea that God's truth is greater than any human interpretation (Volf, 2011). This balance allows for a faith that is both strong and adaptable, capable of engaging with others without resorting to exclusion or intolerance.

The findings of this study suggest that transformative theology provides a vital framework for religious moderation by integrating contextual interpretation, interfaith dialogue, ethical engagement, and spiritual humility. This approach enables Christians to practice their faith authentically while contributing to social harmony. Moreover, transformative theology encourages a shift from a defensive stance on religious diversity to a proactive engagement that views pluralism as an opportunity rather than a challenge (D'Costa, 2009). In a world where religious extremism and intolerance continue to cause division, transformative theology offers an alternative path, one that aligns faith with peace, justice, and mutual respect. Ultimately, religious moderation through transformative theology is not about erasing differences but about managing them constructively (Cone, 2018). It allows Christians to witness their faith in a manner that aligns with Christ's teachings of love and reconciliation. By embracing this theological approach, Christian communities can foster an environment where faith flourishes without fostering division. In doing so, transformative theology becomes a tool for building a future in which religious diversity is not a source of conflict but a testament to the richness of human spirituality and the universality of moral values.

CONCLUSION

Transformative theology provides a progressive and dynamic approach to living out Christian faith in the context of religious moderation. As societies face increasing religious diversity, conflicts, and challenges related to intolerance, transformative theology presents a theological framework that encourages believers to engage with the world in a meaningful and constructive manner. By integrating contextual interpretation, interfaith dialogue, ethical engagement, and spiritual humility, Christians can move beyond rigid exclusivism and embrace a faith that is deeply rooted in love, peace, and justice. This approach not only aligns with Christ's teachings but also equips Christian communities to contribute actively to social harmony and mutual understanding.

A key takeaway from this study is the importance of theological education and church leadership in promoting transformative theology. The way Christianity is taught and preached significantly influences how believers perceive and interact with religious diversity. If theological institutions and church leaders emphasize exclusivist interpretations that portray other religions as threats, it can foster intolerance and division. Conversely, if theological education incorporates transformative theology, it can cultivate an attitude of openness, respect, and collaboration. This shift is necessary for preparing future Christian leaders who can guide congregations toward religious moderation while maintaining a strong theological foundation. The church must embrace its role as a bridge-builder, helping communities navigate religious differences without compromising their faith identity. This study underscores the need for practical applications of transformative theology in various religious and cultural contexts. While the theological principles discussed provide a strong foundation, their implementation may vary depending on sociocultural realities. Future research could explore how different Christian denominations and traditions integrate transformative theology into their teachings and community outreach efforts. Comparative studies between regions with different religious dynamics, such as those with a Christian majority versus those where Christianity is a minority, could provide valuable insights into the adaptability and effectiveness of transformative theology in fostering religious moderation. The role of Christian institutions, including churches, universities, and ecumenical organizations, is crucial in promoting religious moderation. These institutions can serve as platforms for interfaith dialogue, social engagement, and theological reflection that aligns with the principles of transformative theology. Encouraging partnerships with scholars, religious leaders from other traditions, and policymakers can further enhance efforts to build peaceful and inclusive societies.

In conclusion, transformative theology offers a compelling vision for Christianity in an era of religious pluralism. By embracing this theological approach, Christians can contribute to peace, justice, and coexistence while maintaining their faith identity. The integration of contextual interpretation, dialogue, ethical engagement, and humility serves as a pathway toward a Christianity that is not only theologically sound but also socially relevant. As the world continues to grapple with religious tensions, transformative theology provides a much-needed perspective that fosters mutual respect and collective responsibility in building a more harmonious global community. Future studies and initiatives should continue to explore and expand on its practical applications to ensure that Christianity remains a force for unity rather than division.

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