

Issues and Approaches in Contemporary Theological Thinking about Evil

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Rethinking Disaster Theology: Combining Protestant Theology with Local Knowledge and Modern Science in Disaster Response

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Abstract: The interpretation of disaster through a religious lens has produced diverse theological perspectives regarding disaster. This article seeks to analyze the theology of disaster from a Protestant perspective, which may be combined with local knowledge and modern science to create disaster response strategies. This study is based on field studies and related literature analysis with qualitative method using an ethno science approach to see disaster phenomena in the context of Indonesian society, using primary data and secondary data. This study finds out that within Christian theology and among its followers disasters can be seen as the means through which God glorifies His creation while punishing those who have sinned and abandoned His teachings. It concludes, *first*, that God – the Creator – shows His love and mercy even through disaster. In the Protestant perspective, God seeks to honor His creation by mercifully creating balance. *Second*, disaster, as part of a natural cycle, should also be understood through local knowledge and modern science; as such, a holistic approach is necessary to understand and respond to disaster.

Keywords: disaster theology, grace, mercy, balance, holistic

1 Introduction

God's mercy is often ignored in religious interpretations of disaster. Natural and social disasters, as well as viruses and other pandemics, have contributed significantly to scientific and religious discourses even as they have created suffering. Such events always draw diverse interpretations. Such incidents are constructed diversely in society, through what Abdullah identified as a complex and multidimensional discursive process. Three approaches are particularly common in disaster studies: (1) the technocratic approach, which sidelines humanity, (2) the behavioristic approach, which emphasizes responses to disaster, and (3) the politico-economic approach, which emphasizes the structural processes that underpin disaster.¹ Disaster (natural, social, viral, etc.) is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, one that requires a comprehensive and holistic approach.

¹ Abdullah, *Konstruksi dan Reproduksi Sosial atas Bencana Alam*, 19.

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