

TRUTH WITHOUT RUPTURE: A THEOLOGICAL-RELATIONAL MODEL FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN FAITH COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

Conflict within Christian faith communities is a pervasive yet frequently mismanaged phenomenon. Existing literature tends to frame church conflict as resolvable primarily through accommodation, separation, or suppression. This article introduces a new conceptual model Truth Without Rupture grounded in the lived experience of a practitioner-researcher navigating a sustained theological disagreement within a local faith community in Indonesia. Through an autoethnographic methodology, this study examines how a fundamental distinction between epistemic conflict (disagreement over doctrine and interpretation) and ontological relational identity (shared membership in the body of Christ) enabled conflict to be faced directly, mediated formally, and ultimately transformed into deeper community. Drawing on Romans 14, the theology of Miroslav Volf, and contemporary conflict transformation theory, this article argues that genuine reconciliation in faith communities does not require doctrinal consensus, but rather a theological foundation that renders the other permanently undestroyable as a relational subject. The model further identifies hospitality and servant presence as theological practices that sustain relational integrity throughout conflict. Implications for pastoral counseling, church leadership, and practical theology in pluralistic contexts are discussed.

Keywords: church conflict, conflict transformation, practical theology, reconciliation, autoethnography, faith community, hospitality

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is not foreign to the church. From the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 to the fractured denominations of the modern era, disagreement, tension, and rupture have marked the history of Christian communities as surely as unity and fellowship. Yet despite this long history, the practical theological literature on conflict within faith communities remains surprisingly thin in one particular area: how can a believer maintain an honest, principled, and even confrontational theological position while simultaneously preserving the relational fabric of the community?

The dominant models available to church members and leaders when conflict arises tend toward one of three outcomes. The first is accommodation, in which one party yields their position whether genuinely or under social pressure and peace is restored at the cost of honest theological engagement. The second is separation, in which the disagreeing party departs the community, a pattern so common in congregational life that it is often treated as the default resolution. The third is suppression, in which conflict is formally or informally silenced, generating latent tension that resurfaces in different forms over time.

None of these outcomes constitutes genuine reconciliation. Accommodation can mask unresolved disagreement. Separation forecloses the possibility of transformation. Suppression allows wounds to fester beneath the surface of institutional life. What is largely absent from the literature is a model that permits full, honest, and even sharp theological disagreement while simultaneously maintaining and even deepening the relational bond between the conflicting parties.

This article proposes such a model. Drawing on an autoethnographic account of sustained conflict within a faith community in Indonesia, this study traces the emergence and application of what the author terms Truth Without Rupture: a theological-relational framework grounded in the conviction that epistemic disagreement does not and must not determine ontological relational status within the body of Christ.

The argument proceeds as follows. Section II reviews the relevant literature on conflict in faith communities, identifying the theoretical gap this model addresses. Section III articulates the theoretical framework undergirding the model. Section IV presents the autoethnographic methodology. Section V narrates the case. Section VI analyzes the case through the theoretical framework. Section VII presents the full model. Section VIII discusses implications for pastoral counseling and church leadership. Section IX concludes with reflections on the model's limitations and directions for further research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conflict in Faith Communities

Scholars across practical theology, ecclesiology, and pastoral counseling have long recognized conflict as an endemic feature of congregational life. Speed Leas (1992), whose work remains foundational, developed a taxonomy of church conflict ranging from mild problems to church-ending intractable disputes, and noted that most congregations lack the tools to manage conflict beyond its earliest stages. More recently, Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer (2020), in their examination of toxic church cultures, demonstrated that institutional conflict frequently originates not in theological difference per se, but in the structural abuse of power within church systems.

From a systems-theoretic perspective, Edwin H. Friedman (1985) argued that congregations function as emotional systems in which anxiety is the primary driver of dysfunction. Friedman's concept of the non-anxious presence a leader who remains differentiated from the emotional field of the community has been widely applied in pastoral contexts. Tod Bolsinger (2015), building on Friedman's framework, extended this analysis to the adaptive challenges facing contemporary churches navigating cultural disruption.

Within practical theology proper, Miroslav Volf's *Exclusion and Embrace* (1996) remains the most theologically rigorous treatment of conflict and reconciliation. Volf argues that the impulse to exclude to define oneself over against the other is the root of communal violence, and that the Christian response is not the erasure of difference but the embrace of the other in their otherness. Jürgen Moltmann's theology of the cross (1974) similarly insists that solidarity with the suffering and the excluded is constitutive of Christian identity.

In the domain of conflict psychology, Amanda Ripley (2021) has documented the phenomenon of high conflict: the condition in which disagreement becomes identity-fused, such that the other is no longer a person with a different view but an enemy to be defeated. Ripley's analysis is particularly relevant to faith communities, where theological identity and personal identity are often deeply intertwined.

The Gap in the Literature

Despite this rich body of work, a significant gap remains. The existing literature addresses conflict in faith communities primarily at the level of leadership strategy (how pastors manage conflict), organizational systems (how congregational structures produce or suppress conflict), or macro-theological reflection (how reconciliation is theologically conceived). What is largely absent is a model that operates at the level of the individual believer who is embedded in a community, holds a principled theological disagreement, and seeks neither to suppress that disagreement nor to fracture the community.

More specifically, the literature does not adequately address the following question: what theological and relational resources enable a person to maintain honest, even confrontational, doctrinal dissent while simultaneously deepening their commitment to and investment in the community they are disagreeing with? This is the question this article addresses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Epistemic-Ontological Distinction

The first and foundational pillar is a distinction between two levels of reality in Christian community: the epistemic and the ontological. Epistemic conflict refers to disagreement over doctrine, interpretation, and theological understanding. It is the domain of arguments, evidence, exegesis, and reasoned conviction. Epistemic conflict is not only legitimate but healthy; it is the mechanism through which communities sharpen their understanding of truth. Paul's confrontation of Peter in Antioch (Galatians 2:11-14, WEBUS) is a canonical instance of epistemic conflict within the early church, conducted without the dissolution of fellowship.

Ontological relational identity refers to the shared status of all believers as members of the body of Christ. This status is not conferred by doctrinal correctness but by participation in Christ himself. It is, in the language of Paul, the reality that Christ died for both parties in any conflict (Romans 14:15, WEBUS: "Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died").

The critical move in the Truth Without Rupture model is the insistence that these two levels must not be collapsed. Epistemic conflict even sharp, sustained, and unresolved epistemic conflict does not and must not determine ontological relational status. To treat another person as no longer a brother or sister in Christ because they hold a different doctrinal position is to make a category error: it elevates the epistemic to the ontological, and in doing so, arrogates to oneself a judgment that belongs to Christ alone.

This distinction has deep roots in Pauline ecclesiology. Romans 14-15 constitutes the most extended treatment of intra-community doctrinal disagreement in the New Testament. Paul's instruction to the strong and the weak parties who held genuinely incompatible convictions about food offered to idols is not that they must resolve their disagreement before

fellowshipping, but that they must refuse to let their disagreement determine their reception of one another: "Therefore receive one another, even as Christ also received you, to the glory of God" (Romans 15:7, WEBUS).

Hospitality as Theological Practice

The second pillar of the model concerns the role of hospitality. In contemporary discourse, hospitality is often understood in thin, social terms as welcoming and generous behavior. The theological tradition, however, carries a much richer conception. Miroslav Volf (1996) connects hospitality directly to the movement of the triune God toward humanity in the incarnation: the divine self-giving that makes room for the other, that creates space for the different, that refuses to protect itself by exclusion. Volf's concept of embrace the posture of one who opens their arms to receive the other in their otherness is the theological archetype of hospitality.

Christine Pohl (1999), in her historical and theological study of hospitality, argues that the practice of making room for the stranger and the different is constitutive of Christian community, not incidental to it. To practice hospitality toward someone with whom one is in conflict is not a contradiction; it is, paradoxically, a form of witness to the reality of the reconciliation already accomplished in Christ. In the Truth Without Rupture model, hospitality functions not as a strategy for conflict resolution but as a theological practice that enacts and embodies the ontological relational reality that epistemic conflict cannot dissolve. To share a meal with one who has wronged you, to invest in their growth and flourishing, to sponsor their access to resources even when those resources represent a tradition you question these are acts that declare, in embodied form, that the other remains permanently received.

Servant Presence

The third pillar is what this article terms servant presence: the sustained, active investment in the welfare of a community even through and beyond conflict. Servant presence is distinguished from mere tolerance (which is passive) and from strategic engagement (which is instrumental) by its theological motivation. Dallas Willard (1988) argued that spiritual formation is the transformation of the whole person mind, will, body, and social relationships into the character of Christ. One dimension of that character, as narrated throughout the Gospels, is the refusal of Jesus to withdraw from those who oppose or misunderstand him. His presence with the Pharisees, his continued engagement with those who sought to trap him, his return to communities that had rejected him all of these constitute a pattern of servant presence that is neither naive nor masochistic, but grounded in the conviction that the other remains the object of divine love regardless of their behavior.

Servant presence in the Truth Without Rupture model involves continuing to serve, invest in, and contribute to the community even while disagreement persists. Crucially, it may involve serving through means that the servant themselves does not personally endorse providing resources associated with a theological tradition one questions, for example not as an act of hypocrisy but as an act of love toward those for whom those resources hold meaning.

METHODOLOGY

Autoethnography as Method

This study employs autoethnography as its primary methodology. Autoethnography is a qualitative research approach that uses the researcher's own experience as data, situating that experience within its broader social, cultural, and theoretical context (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). It is both a process and a product: as a process, it involves systematic reflection on personal experience; as a product, it generates narrative accounts that are analytically and theoretically engaged.

Autoethnography is particularly well-suited to practical theology for several reasons. First, practical theology is inherently concerned with the intersection of lived experience and theological reflection; autoethnography makes this intersection methodologically explicit. Second, conflict in faith communities involves subjective, relational, and emotionally complex dynamics that resist purely objectivist methods. Third, the researcher's positionality in faith community conflict is not an obstacle to be overcome but a resource to be analyzed the researcher is always already embedded in the community they study.

Carolyn Ellis (2004) describes the standard for autoethnographic validity not as the correspondence between narrative and external fact, but as resonance: the capacity of the account to illuminate experiences that readers recognize as genuine, and to generate theoretical insights that hold beyond the particular case. This study aims for both.

Researcher Positionality

The researcher is a practitioner-academic who combines professional work in organizational consulting and coaching with doctoral studies in practical theology. At the time of the events narrated, the researcher was an active member of the faith community in question, serving as a theological discussant, community contributor, and lay leader. The researcher holds formal theological convictions that diverge from a particular doctrinal tradition emphasized within the community, and this divergence is the proximate source of the conflict narrated.

This positionality is not treated as a methodological liability. The researcher's embeddedness in the community, their stake in its relational health, and their theological convictions are all analytically relevant. Where necessary, the narrative distinguishes between first-person experience and reflective analysis.

Anonymization and Ethics

All names, specific locations, institutional identifiers, and distinctive doctrinal references have been anonymized or generalized. The doctrinal tradition at the center of the conflict is referred to throughout as "the community's received doctrinal framework." No identifying information about individual community members has been retained. This anonymization was conducted in accordance with principles of participant protection standard in qualitative research.

Context

The researcher is a member of a Protestant faith community organized around a particular theological tradition. The community operates across multiple cities, with the researcher attending the primary gathering in one city while also participating in a smaller mid-week fellowship group (hereafter "the fellowship") in a second city where the researcher's professional work is based. The fellowship meets regularly in members' homes and is led by a married couple hereafter referred to as the fellowship leaders under the broader authority of the community's regional pastor.

The researcher holds formal theological training pursued independently across multiple years, drawing on mainstream evangelical, Reformed, and ecumenical sources. This training has produced theological convictions that diverge from the community's received doctrinal framework in several respects. The researcher's theological disagreements are substantive and well-reasoned; in prior encounters with senior members of the community across multiple locations, these arguments have been engaged but not successfully rebutted.

Crucially, the regional pastor had confirmed explicitly to the researcher that membership in the community does not require adherence to the community's received doctrinal framework: the basis of membership is faith in Jesus Christ. The researcher's continued participation in the community rests on this understanding.

The Precipitating Incident

During one fellowship gathering, the researcher voiced a theological position that departed from the community's received doctrinal framework. The manner of expression was direct and unambiguous consistent with the researcher's established communicative style in prior gatherings across multiple locations, where such directness had been received without significant relational disruption. On this occasion, however, one of the fellowship leaders responded with sharp public censure, characterizing the researcher's position as heretical and the researcher as spiritually deviant. The researcher was not given opportunity to respond substantively in the gathering.

Subsequently, a WhatsApp group used by the fellowship was altered: a post by the researcher setting out their theological argument was deleted by the fellowship leader, and the group was set to read-only mode, preventing further contributions by the researcher. A junior community member a student benefiting from a scholarship administered by the community's institutional arm, with which the researcher also had a professional relationship was used as the technical executor of these changes.

The fellowship leader contacted the researcher privately to offer an explanation for the post deletion, characterizing the content as accusatory. The researcher acknowledged the message briefly. The conflict, however, was not resolved by this exchange. The researcher experienced the incident as public character defamation a serious matter with both relational and, potentially, legal dimensions.

Framing the Conflict

At this point, the researcher made a decision that would prove determinative for the trajectory of the conflict. The decision was not primarily strategic; it emerged from a theological conviction that had been forming over years of community life. The researcher separated two things that the incident had attempted to fuse: the epistemic question (was the researcher's theological argument correct?) and the relational question (did the fellowship leader remain the researcher's sibling in Christ?). The answer to the first question was, in the researcher's assessment, yes the theological argument was sound and had not been refuted. The answer to the second question was unconditionally yes, regardless of the outcome of the first. The fellowship leader, for all their behavior in this incident, remained someone for whom Christ had died. That fact could not be altered by theological disagreement, nor by personal offense.

This framing did not produce passivity. The researcher decided to pursue formal mediation not as a prelude to legal action as a first resort, but as the appropriate first step in seeking justice through the community's own structures. The researcher contacted the regional pastor and requested a mediated process.

Mediation Process

Two rounds of mediation were conducted. The first took place via video conference, attended by the researcher and the fellowship leader without his spouse, whose participation had been central to the precipitating incident. In this session, the fellowship leader raised objections to the researcher's manner of expression and the perceived complexity of their theological language.

The researcher responded substantively: noting, first, that the fellowship leader's own community tradition regularly employed complex theological language, which the researcher had in fact consistently simplified for the fellowship audience; second, that the New Testament's most effective theological communicators were frequently sharp in their engagement with doctrinal error; and third, that the specific accusations made against the researcher concerning their manner of speech in a professional context did not correspond to any code of professional ethics the researcher was subject to, which instead require open and honest communication.

The researcher also noted that the community's own claims about spiritual maturity regularly invoked in its teaching implied a capacity for engagement with substantive theological argument. The first mediation did not produce resolution. The second mediation involved the regional pastor, the head of the community's institutional arm, and both fellowship leaders, meeting in person at a venue arranged by the researcher. In this session, the fellowship leaders were asked by the community's senior leadership to honor the researcher's right to theological difference of opinion. This instruction was accepted, and the formal conflict was resolved: the researcher's freedom to engage theologically as they saw fit was recognized.

Post-Mediation Dynamics

Following the formal resolution, the fellowship leader initiated contact with the researcher with a practical inquiry unrelated to the conflict which the researcher read as an implicit gesture of reconciliation. The researcher accepted this gesture without requiring its explicit

acknowledgment. Shortly thereafter, the researcher took their scheduled turn hosting the fellowship a rotation conducted among community members. Rather than hosting at a private residence (which the researcher did not maintain in the fellowship's city), the researcher arranged the gathering at a restaurant, reserving a private dining space of notably high quality. The gathering was received warmly by all attendees.

This pattern continued. The researcher consistently hosted fellowship gatherings at high-quality restaurant venues, providing varied culinary experiences for community members. On a subsequent occasion, the researcher also provided hospitality to the entire volunteer team involved in a community event the night before the event covering the meal for all participants, including individuals outside the researcher's direct sphere of relationship, without announcement or recognition.

In parallel, the researcher who had maintained theological reservations about the community's received doctrinal framework continued to purchase printed materials representing that framework in their original-language editions (which the researcher judged to be more accurate than available translations) and distribute them to community members in multiple locations, including the fellowship. This practice was continued precisely because the researcher's relational investment in the community's members was not contingent on their doctrinal alignment.

Over subsequent months, the relational dynamic between the researcher and the fellowship leaders transformed substantially. The fellowship leader, enrolled in theological studies, began acquiring the academic theological vocabulary that the researcher had employed during the conflict and through which the researcher's positions were now more readily comprehensible. The fellowship leaders' posture toward the researcher became markedly more respectful. Practical collaboration increased: the researcher was invited to serve in leadership roles at community events, and professional relationships developed between the researcher and the fellowship leaders.

The conflict that had produced public censure and communication restriction gave way to a relationship characterized by mutual investment, practical partnership, and genuine warmth without requiring the researcher to yield their theological convictions, and without requiring the fellowship leaders to abandon theirs.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Epistemic-Ontological Distinction in Practice

The most critical move in the researcher's navigation of this conflict was the explicit and sustained refusal to allow epistemic disagreement to determine ontological relational status. When the fellowship leader characterized the researcher as spiritually deviant, they were, in effect, making exactly this conflation: treating doctrinal difference as disqualifying fellowship. The researcher refused this move. This refusal was not diplomatic; it was theological. The researcher's conviction, grounded in Pauline ecclesiology and particularly in Romans 14-15, was that the fellowship leader's membership in the body of Christ was established not by their doctrinal accuracy but by Christ's death for them. This was a non-negotiable ontological datum. The researcher's epistemic disagreement with the fellowship leader's doctrinal positions a

disagreement the researcher maintained throughout and continues to hold was entirely compatible with this ontological conviction.

Practically, this meant that the researcher pursued formal justice (mediation, the formal recognition of their right to theological expression) without treating the fellowship leaders as enemies. The pursuit of justice was an expression of respect for the community's structures, for the researcher's own dignity, and for the fellowship leaders' capacity to receive correction from their own senior leadership. The researcher did not require the fellowship leaders to be destroyed in order for the conflict to be resolved.

Hospitality as Theological Declaration

The researcher's practice of hospitality following the mediation is amenable to a reductive reading: that the meals, the venue quality, and the generosity were strategic tools for softening the fellowship leaders' posture. This reading should be resisted. The hospitality practice preceded the conflict, was continued through it, and extended well beyond the fellowship leaders themselves to community members with whom the researcher had no particular relational interest. It was, in Volf's terms, a practice of embrace: an embodied enactment of the conviction that the other is received, welcomed, and cared for regardless of whether the relationship is comfortable or the theology is aligned.

Most strikingly, the researcher's decision to continue purchasing and distributing materials representing a doctrinal tradition they disagree with specifically selecting editions that would provide community members with the most accurate access to that tradition's content illustrates the theological logic of servant presence with particular clarity. The researcher was not endorsing the tradition. They were serving the people who found that tradition meaningful, precisely because those people are members of the body of Christ. The researcher's own theological convictions did not constitute a veto on the flourishing of those who hold different ones.

Comparison with Existing Models

The case resists classification within the three dominant conflict outcomes identified in the literature review. It was not accommodation: the researcher did not yield their theological position at any point during or after the conflict. The formal mediation process resulted in the recognition of the researcher's right to maintain and express their convictions the opposite of accommodation.

It was not separation: the researcher remained fully and actively engaged in the community throughout the conflict and afterward, with increased rather than decreased investment. It was not suppression: the conflict was engaged directly, formally, and with full transparency. The researcher insisted on a structured mediation process rather than allowing the incident to be buried by a private exchange.

What occurred instead was something the existing literature does not have a name for: a conflict in which both the epistemic and the relational dimensions were taken fully seriously, pursued through appropriate channels, and resolved without either dimension being sacrificed to the other.

The Truth Without Rupture Model

Model Overview

The Truth Without Rupture model is a theological-relational framework for conflict navigation in faith communities. It is not primarily a technique or a sequence of steps; it is a theological posture that generates characteristic practices. The model consists of three constitutive convictions and three corresponding practices.

Constitutive Convictions

Conviction One: Epistemic conflict does not determine ontological relational status. The disagreeing other remains a member of the body of Christ regardless of the content or intensity of the disagreement. This conviction must be held not as a strategic calculation but as a theological reality.

Conviction Two: Truth claims have integrity and demand honest expression. The model does not counsel the softening or withdrawal of genuine theological convictions in the interest of relational peace. On the contrary, honest theological engagement including confrontation is itself an act of love toward the community, because it takes both the truth and the other seriously enough to engage both directly.

Conviction Three: Service to the other is not contingent on agreement. The researcher's continued investment in the community including through resources they do not personally endorse enacts the Pauline conviction that Christ's death for the other constitutes an unconditional claim on the believer's care for that person.

Corresponding Practices

Practice One: Formal engagement with injustice. When relational offense occurs, the Truth Without Rupture model calls for formal, structured engagement mediation, the involvement of appropriate authority, the clear articulation of grievance rather than either passive acceptance or escalation beyond the community's own structures. This practice honors both the researcher's dignity and the community's capacity for self-correction.

Practice Two: Embodied hospitality. The ongoing practice of generosity, welcome, and investment in the community particularly in material and tangible forms enacts the theological conviction that the other is permanently received. Hospitality in this model is not a reward for good behavior but a declaration of ontological relational reality.

Practice Three: Servant presence through disagreement. Continued, active, generous involvement in the life of the community including service through means one does not personally endorse embodies the conviction that one's membership in the community is not conditional on its conformity to one's own theological positions.

Enabling Conditions

The model operates most effectively under three enabling conditions. First, the community must have functional mediating structures leadership with sufficient authority to adjudicate conflict

and sufficient integrity to do so fairly. Second, the individual must have a sufficiently strong theological identity that their convictions can survive relational pressure without requiring external validation. Third, the individual must have internalized the theological logic of the model at a level deep enough to sustain costly practice particularly the practice of serving through means they disagree with. These conditions are not always present. The model's limitations are addressed in the conclusion.

Discussion

Implications for Pastoral Counseling

The Truth Without Rupture model has several implications for pastoral counseling in faith community contexts. First, it suggests that the therapeutic goal in church conflict is not consensus but differentiation: the capacity of conflicting parties to maintain their respective positions without requiring the other's defeat or departure. Edwin Friedman's concept of differentiation of self finds theological grounding in the model's epistemic-ontological distinction.

Second, the model highlights the therapeutic importance of formal process. The researcher's insistence on structured mediation rather than accepting the informal resolution offered by the fellowship leader's private apology was not obstinacy but integrity: it created a process through which the fellowship leaders' authority figures could provide correction and through which the researcher's dignity could be formally recognized. Pastoral counselors working with church conflict should attend to the healing function of formal process, not merely its instrumental utility.

Third, the model suggests that hospitality practices can function as a form of embodied therapy in conflicted communities: acts of generosity that declare relational reality before that reality is felt emotionally.

Implications for Church Leadership

For church leaders, the model offers a frame for understanding conflict that does not require its elimination. Healthy congregational conflict the direct, honest engagement of doctrinal and practical disagreement is not a threat to community but a sign of its vitality. The leadership task is not to prevent conflict but to maintain the theological and relational conditions under which conflict can be navigated without rupture.

This requires leaders to model the epistemic-ontological distinction themselves: to be secure enough in the community's ontological foundation its identity as the body of Christ that they do not need to eliminate epistemic difference in order to feel safe. Leaders who treat doctrinal conformity as a condition of belonging create communities that are brittle rather than resilient, and that fracture under the pressure of genuine theological engagement.

Implications for the Indonesian Context

Indonesia presents a distinctive context for the application of this model. As a society characterized by profound religious plurality, strong communal values, and a cultural premium on harmony (*rukun*), conflict within religious communities carries particular social weight. The public dimension of the precipitating incident in this case the public declaration of the researcher as spiritually deviant was experienced as especially serious precisely because of the communal nature of reputation in Indonesian social life.

At the same time, the Indonesian tradition of *musyawarah* deliberative communal discernment provides a cultural resource for the formal mediation practice the model recommends. The researcher's pursuit of structured mediation, rather than individual confrontation or legal action, resonated with communal values around the collective resolution of dispute.

The model's emphasis on hospitality also finds resonance in Indonesian cultural forms: the practice of *makan bersama* (eating together) as a vehicle for relational repair is deeply embedded in Indonesian communal life across religious and ethnic lines. The researcher's consistent practice of communal meals as a form of embodied hospitality was not culturally arbitrary; it drew on and gave theological content to an existing cultural practice.

CONCLUSION

This article has introduced the Truth Without Rupture model as a theological-relational framework for conflict navigation in faith communities. Grounded in an autoethnographic account of sustained theological conflict within an Indonesian faith community, the model proposes that genuine reconciliation does not require doctrinal consensus. It requires, instead, a theological foundation that renders the other permanently undestroyable as a relational subject and a set of practices that embody that conviction through formal justice-seeking, hospitality, and servant presence.

The model's primary contribution to the literature is the articulation and operationalization of the epistemic-ontological distinction: the insistence that disagreement at the level of doctrine does not determine and must not be allowed to determine the ontological relational status of the other as a member of the body of Christ. This distinction is implicit in Pauline ecclesiology but has not, to the author's knowledge, been articulated as a functional model for conflict navigation in practical theology.

Several limitations of the model warrant acknowledgment. First, the autoethnographic method, while appropriate for the phenomenon under study, limits generalizability; the model requires testing in contexts involving different community structures, cultural settings, and conflict types. Second, the enabling conditions identified in Section VII are not universally present; the model may not be navigable in communities lacking functional mediating structures or in conflicts involving power asymmetry so extreme as to preclude formal process. Third, the model assumes a level of theological and psychological differentiation in the individual that not all community members possess; formation in this kind of differentiation is itself a pastoral task.

Future research might examine the model's applicability in ecumenical and inter-religious conflict contexts, where the shared ontological foundation of the body of Christ is not available

in the same form. Quantitative instruments for measuring the epistemic-ontological distinction as a psychological and theological construct would also advance the field. Most urgently, longitudinal studies of conflict outcomes in faith communities are needed studies that track not merely whether formal conflict is resolved, but whether the relational fabric of the community is deepened or depleted over time.

The early church in Antioch survived the conflict between Paul and Peter. It survived not because the conflict was suppressed, accommodated, or resolved by one party's departure, but because both parties belonged to something and Someone larger than their disagreement. That is the ground on which this model stands.

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