

Religion, Human Fellowship, and Our Wounded World: The Relevance of the 2019 Abu Dhabi Declaration in Our Post-truth Society

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ABSTRACT:

This paper discusses the role of religion in reducing the trend of rising radicalism in Indonesia's educational institutions. Educational experts in the country, such as Ahmad Syafi'i Ma'arif, Bagong Suyanto, Sidharta Susila, and many others, find that educational institutions in this country 'have been turned into arenas for the ideological movement of radicalism' and have produced intolerant individuals. "Radicalism and intolerance in educational institutions not only creates complexity and obscures the focus of education, but also threatens the existence of this country," claims Sidharta Susila, illustrating his concern in one of the nation's most well-regarded newspapers (*Kompas*, 17-06-2022). Negative prejudices against 'others' have increasingly intensified in the last few decades, and hate speech has become daily consumption. This phenomenon is especially true among religiously homogeneous schools, Bagong Suyanto asserts (09-06-2022). How should we respond to this rise of intolerance? The Abu Dhabi Declaration on Human Fraternity signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahman Al-Tayyeb (2019) seems to offer relevant reflections. This paper argues that Indonesia must devise purposeful multicultural religious education for young people who must learn to dismantle the exclusive mindsets of those who misuse their powers.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

This paper attempts to translate some noble ideals of The Abu Dhabi Declaration on Human Fraternity (AD), *On Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, which was signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb on February 4, 2019. The main purpose of this Declaration is a "profound hope in a bright future for all human beings" (AD par. 3), where "universal peace can be enjoyed by all in this life" (par. 44). Together the Pope and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar decided that diverse religions and their ideals can each respectively be used "to advance a culture of mutual respect in the awareness of the great divine grace that makes all human beings brothers and sisters" (par. 3).

This article specifically addresses the young generation in Indonesia. Youth are the main actors of the world to come. They will have all the responsibility to build up a more dignified '*rumah bersama*' (the common home) for everyone against all kinds of discrimination and resentment towards 'others.' As is the spirit of this Declaration, we also want to raise the challenging question: How can the Church offer a source of joy

and hope (*gaudium et spes*) for a lifeway that welcomes others as brothers and sisters? In what way can we train our educational institutions to participate in paving the way towards more cooperation and mutual enrichment in an era of our hyperconnected society.

While reflecting on the development of a humane world and the contribution of religion to wider-spread morality, we will discuss intercultural values in education for our young generation. Religious education must reflect an attitude that respects all human beings as brothers and sisters: fellows to be supported and loved despite their differences (AD par. 1). This is the basic spirit for defenders of the rights and dignity of the poor, the weak, and the oppressed (par. 39). Such an inclusive way of behaving presupposes the importance of encounters between believers, namely the conditions that motivate and empower everyone to collaborate for a constructive ‘culture of dialogue’ (par. 14) for the good of all.

RELIGIOUS AND CIVILIZED BEINGS

Multicultural and religious education must teach the importance of a sincere and honest conscience. This conscience must be imbued with the spirit of caring for others: empathy, altruistic love, solidarity, responsibility, and tolerance. Psychologically, these values are the basic principles of civilized human morality. In moral theology, this principle of coexistence is known as The Golden Rule: “Treat others as you would like to be treated yourself.” Such religious and moral responsibility calls upon everyone to work strenuously to spread the culture of tolerance and of living together in peace.

The Golden Rule became the foundation for religious principles when the evangelist Matthew recorded the teaching of the Lord Jesus: “Whatever you want people to do to you, do it to them also” (Matt 7:12). Or, Saint Luke puts it this way: “As you want people to do to you, do the same to them” (6:31). For activists of cultural and religious studies, this statement expresses human incentive and at the same time echoes divine wisdom. The true fellowship between human beings has a theological basis inspired by the working of the Holy Spirit, since ‘his presence and activity are universal, limited neither by space nor time’ (*Redemptoris Missio* [RM], 28). To bolster this claim, we may cite some more lines of Saint John Paul II’s teaching:

The Spirit’s presence and activity affect not only the individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures, and religions. Indeed, the Spirit is at the origin of the noble ideals and undertakings which benefit humanity on its journey through history: “The Spirit of God with marvelous foresight directs the course of the ages and renews the face of the earth.” (RM 28).

First, the human basis shows the existence of humanist similarities and harmony between one person and another. For example, everyone has a need for security and comfort in addition to primary needs, such as clothing, food, and shelter. These basic needs can only be guaranteed through cooperation. The same is true for secondary

and other needs. There are many similarities both in the kinds of needs and in how to meet them (cf. As-Sirjani, 2015:661-685). This productive collaboration in Indonesia is called *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation): a principle of interdependence that empowers and enables reciprocity.

Gotong royong presupposes the existence of neighborly encounters, forms of friendship which in turn give birth to solidarity and tolerance among people of different households. This deep sense of sympathy and empathy towards achieving a certain goal strengthens relations between members of a community. This mutual cooperation has been proven to be the guardian spirit that maintains the harmony of Indonesian society, a moral-spiritual capital for the creation of a harmonious and religious society (cf. Syam, 2018; Lubis, 2020). In essence, humanity is a meeting point that embraces the souls of traditional communities in this very diverse archipelago. Human values, as formulated in the second precept of Pancasila (“Just and civilized humanity”), are socio-cultural wisdom that we inherit from our ancestors, which animates the behavior, feelings, and mindsets of our society.

A theological lens might interpret *gotong royong* as evidence of collective faith in a God who is all-loving and all-merciful, Lord of all nations and all creatures. The Abu Dhabi Declaration on Human Fraternity (par. 1) asserts that “faith leads the believer to see in one another a brother or sister to be supported and loved”. This transcendental value leads people to a moral obligation to express fraternity by protecting their fellow creatures and supporting everyone, especially those who are weakest and most in need.

This biblical basis for altruistic love was formulated by Saint John thus: “We love because God first loved us” (1 Jn 4:19). According to the traditions of the prophets, God’s love is always directed to and on the side of those who are suffering, the oppressed, and the excluded. Likewise, in the New Testament, empathy and solidarity with others who suffer, are excluded, and cannot defend themselves are appreciated as the superior character of the believer. We see, for example, the Lord Jesus’ description of the “last judgment” (Matt. 25:31-46) or the parable of “the Good Samaritan” (Lk 10:25-37).

In essence, humans deserve to be loved by each other as brothers and sisters, as the Creator loves all His creatures because He Himself is Mercy and Love in the truest sense. The theological basis of this golden law makes the human fraternity provide the Abu Dhabi Declaration divine weight and character. From the perspective of the Study of Religions, all religions and religious traditions of humankind provide this solid theological basis for a collective and noble social ethics.

As proven by declarations after their latest meeting, the Pope together with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar hold the same conviction that religions must serve and honor all human beings regardless of their religion; these religions have a mission to promote civilization that honors human dignity. “In many cultures and times,” says Mary Pat

Fisher of the Gobind Sadan Institute for Advanced Studies, India, “religion is the main foundation of life, permeating all aspects of human existence” (2011:3). Fisher explains further: “Scholars in the fields of cultural anthropology, sociology, philosophy, psychology, and even biology make religion a partner for their particular perspective to explain what religion is and why it exists for those who no longer see it as necessary” (2011:3).

Komarudin Hidayat, from Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University, Jakarta, wrote:

For the people of Indonesia, religion is a big and strong house that is inhabited from birth and grows until death. Therefore, all activities and traces of life are never separated from religious awareness. [...] Especially for a Muslim, any activity is always ordered to pray, and ask for protection, guidance, and Divine providence. Such a unification of religion and culture can be seen, among other things, in weddings. There they meet and unite religion, customs, and state regulations (2019:3).

The younger generation, who will carry out the responsibility to develop peaceful landscapes and become defenders of the rights of the *wong cilik* (little ones) (cf. AD par. 39), have important positions in the better world of tomorrow. That is, they deserve to be nurtured – and to be taught to train themselves – in these qualities of altruistic love or the supreme and transcendental principles, such as compassion, hospitality, harmonious coexistence, being kind to others, and being useful to society at large. The idea of responsibility is crucial for the next generation of Indonesians. Nadiem Makarim (Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia for the period 2019-2024), in an interview with a Television Broadcaster Nirina Zubir (cf. Darmawan, Artiningsih, Prasetya, 2020:16-17), said that his parents always reminded him and his brothers to never forget about Indonesia. Nadiem recalls: “I was always told by my parents from a young age, that I was allowed to go anywhere, abroad, but at some point, I had to return to my country to contribute.”

Need for education relating to universal compassion grows paramount due to the rise of religious intolerance in our contemporary world. Reality is not always as beautiful as it is idealized. Conflicts, hostilities, wars, hunger, injustice, and all forms of ‘culture of hatred’ that support a ‘culture of death’ repeatedly occur from time to time (cf. Sen, 2006; Slocum-Bradley, 2008; Fukuyama, 2018). Today’s social media, whether printed, audio-visual, or digital, are never absent from reporting the tragic events in our news at global, regional, national, and domestic spheres. Religions are often accused of being the parties most responsible for the various conflicts and violence that occur between human beings. In addition, books analyzing “the correlation between conflict and violence with religion” became bestsellers in the last few decades (cf. Funk, 2012; Juergensmeyer, 2003; Juergensmeyer et al., ed., 2013; Murphy, 2011; Armstrong, 2016).

Following the 2019 Abu Dhabi Declaration on Human Fraternity, religious leaders and all leaders of society renewed their hope in interreligious harmony. The Pope and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar invite all parties to carry out self-criticism and self-introspection before unleashing accusations against others: this to advance a civilization that respects human dignity. Anyone who is so sincere in his/her religion seems to be quite disturbed by the statements of researchers campaigning for a 'peaceful society without religion.' These two great religious leaders of our time remind the rest of us of the important role of religion in designing social systems that glorify diversity among human beings through their unity under God.

In The Abu Dhabi Declaration on Human Fraternity we read a few critiques of religious distortion:

We firmly state that religion must not provoke war, hatred, hostility, and extremism, nor should it provoke violence or the shedding of blood. This tragic reality is the result of deviations from religious teachings. [...] This is done to achieve goals that are political, economic, worldly, and petty. Therefore, we call on all parties to stop using religion to incite (people) to hatred, violence, extremism, and blind fanaticism, and to refrain from using the name of Allah to justify acts of murder, exile, terrorism, and oppression. We ask this based on our shared belief in a God who did not create women and men to be killed or to fight each other or not to be tortured or humiliated in their lives and circumstances. Allah, the Almighty, does not need to be defended by anyone and does not want His name to be used to terrorize people (par. 25).

Here we are also reminded of the books, such as *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (2002) by John L. Esposito, which has been translated by the publisher Ikon Terlitera (2003); or the book *Not in God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence* (2017) by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. These books help people of good will see that all forms of religious violence are committed by misinterpretations of sacred texts. In his book, *The Harmony of Humanity*, Raghib As-Sirjani also expresses the same concern:

A religious text or text should not be taken from its context, and then placed in another context that gives a completely different meaning and understanding. A fragment of an incident should not be blown up in such a way that the spirit it conveys covers the overall flow of events so that it seems as if that is the spirit of the whole incident (2015: 752).

These aforementioned writers and many others are in agreement that serious efforts must be devoted to rereading sacred texts clearly and critically (cf. Ghazali, 2009: xv-xvi, xx). Only then will religious adherents comprehend the causes of hatred, radicalism, and religious extremism in order to diffuse conflicts and stop passing them to future generations.

Rabbi Sacks gave this advice:

If only we could listen closely to the voices of others, we would certainly find that under our skin are brothers and sisters, members of the human family under God as the parenthood of God. If the others become brothers and sisters and conflict is transformed into harmony, we are certainly already on a journey towards society – as one family – and the drama of redemption can begin 2017:160).

Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb keep their optimistic conviction. They believe that this traditionally inherited moral-religious capital can be worked out to develop civilized humanity. The Abu Dhabi Joint Declaration also emphasizes the belief that all moral capital can be explored more intensively and extensively to promote a “common world” for all people. This noble work to promote a “common world” for people of all religions (AD par. 39) is likely to force religious educators to walk a steep road. Therefore, the Pope and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar invite this humanitarian mission to be handled together. The current century of dialogue (Swidler, 1990; Chia, 2019) makes it possible for constructive cooperation on a universal scale by involving all parties of goodwill, regardless of religious backgrounds, beliefs, and secular ideologies.

COMMON CONCERNS

Apart from the things that have been mentioned above, The Abu Dhabi Declaration on Human Fraternity signed in the capital city of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was born from a shared concern for the condition of the global community far from the values of human civilization. The declaration identifies poverty, conflict, and community suffering as a result of the arms race, social injustice, corruption, social inequality, moral decline, terrorism, discrimination, and various extremisms (AD par. 2,19,20). Political crises in many countries cause natural resources to be enjoyed by only a few wealthy individuals; meanwhile, severe poverty causes starvation and death of millions of children, and those who live in safety and comfort walk away with little sense of their responsibility (par. 18,21).

The progress of global development through technological revolution and scientific progress has been accompanied by a moral and spiritual decline in society. Group greed and egoism continue to surface. Various minorities demand that their rights be fulfilled, but they forget their obligations to those close to home.

Religious teachings are often twisted – as has already been mentioned above – to justify war, raising hatred, hostility, bloodshed, blind fanaticism, and various kinds of violence against others. Of course, all these tragic stories in human society that are still ongoing, as recognized by this Declaration, are serious deviations from the true teachings of religion (cf. par. 25). How can this uncivilized and undignified condition be overcome? The two leaders of the faithful, Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-

Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, declared this condition must be overcome through common resolve. Just and civilized humanity is one of the key expressions of the struggle of world religions. The act of living together in peace amidst diversity is the responsibility of all people of goodwill. It is said that promoting a 'culture of tolerance and living together in peace' (par. 16) in this world is the responsibility of all believers. This might seem like a strenuous if not impossible mission. World historians recount the existence of various religious radicalisms, national and ethnic extremism, as well as intolerance in the East and West (par. 20) which grows and develops one after another from time-to-time and from generation to generation.

Nevertheless, Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, remain convinced that these 'universe masterpieces' must be done collaboratively and continuously. All walks of life are invited to cooperate: international and regional authorities, all government agencies and civil society, religious institutions, intellectuals and leading thinkers in society, artists, media practitioners, cultural specialists, researchers, and all people of faith who share the vision of goodwill (cf. par. 38).

For society and tomorrow's world, the younger generation needs to receive serious and continuous assistance. Formal educational institutions, whether managed by the state or by private sponsors, both religious institutions and those without a 'religious flag', are highly expected to take an active part in promoting tolerance amidst diversity. Logically, by agreeing to learn compassion and tolerance, believers participate in God's mission to defend higher visions humanity, especially the weak, the oppressed, the marginalized, and those who cannot defend themselves. Religious traditions from various parts of the world teach this noble value. In fact, it is often formulated very explicitly. Christian tradition, for example, teaches thus:

If anyone says 'I love God' and hates his brother, he is a liar, because he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And this commandment we receive from Him: Whoever loves God must also love his brother (1 John 4:20-21).

Hating fellow human beings, in other words, is an act of direct harassment against Allah, the Most Merciful. There is a direct correlation between man to God and to each other. The Gospel of Matthew records the teaching of the Lord Jesus regarding the commandment of love, namely love for God which is equal to love for one's neighbor. The first and foremost commandment is "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Mt 22:37; cf. De 6:4-5). The second commandment is like the first: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Mt 22:39; cf. Le 19:18).

In an Islamic hadith, as Reynaldi Adi Surya (December 9, 2019) wrote, Allah once said: "O children and grandchildren of Adam, I am sick but you do not visit Me". Then said (Adam's children and grandchildren): "O Lord, how can I visit You, while You are the Lord of the Worlds?" Allah replied, "Don't you know that my servant so and so is

sick, but you don't visit him. Don't you know that when you visited him, I was by his side?"

In his book, *Peradaban Sarung: Veni, Vidi, Santri – Sarong Civilization: Veni, Vidi, Santri* (2018), Ach. Dhofir Zuhry wrote: "Before learning about God and religion, first learn about humans. So that if one day you defend God and religion, you will not forget that you are human" (p. v). In the formation of institutions and moral-religious education, both traditional and modern, the young generation must accept the opportunity to equip themselves with global tolerance rooted in local cultural wisdom.

SOCIAL-RELIGIOUS CAPITAL

Indonesia, as a nation-state is very diverse in regards to culture, religion, ethnicity, race, and social standing, and intercommunication between these groups would result in great benefit for all. This country is very rich in socio-cultural and moral-religious values inherited from our ancestors. The guidelines for 'unity in diversity' (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*) remain the inspiration for the ideal of living together. The motto of the State, inherited from the sage Mpu Prapanca (14th century), remains the common moral code that integrates the various aspirations of groups unique in their interests, different descent groups (either local or mixed ethnicity), regional languages, cultures, religions and traditional beliefs, and geographic orientations. This orientational guide has become an important knot in the third precept of this country, "*Persatuan Indonesia*" (Unity of Indonesia). In his book, *Negara Paripurna* (2011), Yudi Latif writes: "With the birth of the Indonesian nation-state, the pre-Indonesian political community units – which is a primordial and perennial perspective, described as having formed different nations of their own – were demoted to 'tribes.'" (2011:369). To emphasize this national 'unity in diversity and diversity in unity', Yudi Latif quoted Bung Karno's (Soekarno's) description below:

The word 'tribe' or 'suku' in Indonesian, but 'suku' in Javanese also means 'sikal' or feet in English. So, the Indonesian people have many legs... there are Javanese feet, Sundanese feet, Sumatran feet, Irian feet, Dayak feet, Balinese feet, Sumba feet, Chinese peranakan feet... feet rather than one body, the body of the Indonesian people!" (2011:369.)

The struggle to create unity within a 'one nation-state' that transcends these ethnic or hereditary considerations is an ongoing process. Building up a sense of nationality by generating nationalist sentiments or collective thoughts in the realization of being one nation in one country is a tough job that has long been attempted by the founders of this country. It is the responsibility of the younger generation to take over the duty to continue the struggle for this idealism in justice and civility.

This national unity and integrity are (and continue to be) the common homework throughout the country. The critical question is: "What guarantees the cohesion of this national unity? Does nationality depend solely on common language or ideological

similarities and theological-spiritual interpretations or similarities in certain socio-economic and political-cultural interests? What has been the unity and integrity of the Indonesian nation since this country was founded? In response to this, Yudi Latif (2011:370) stated that Soekarno, citing Renan, said that what binds him is the will to live together (*le désir d'être ensemble*). The following is Soekarno's words referred to by Yudi Latif:

So, the human group, although the religion varies in color, although the language varies, even though the origin of the derivatives varies, as long as the human group has the will to live together, it is a nation" (2011:370).

The shared goodwill and commitment that established the founding of the Indonesian nation-state arguably implies the existence of a 'common soul' lingering since the primordial origins of the people of this archipelagic country. Edward Shils, as quoted by Yudi Latif, calls it 'a sense of connection'. He said: "Membership of a nation requires a sense of connection with other people who both make up the nation" (Latif, t.t.: 3). In essence, this shared spirit is also what inspires collaboration between all levels of society, which (ever) is proud of, namely mutual cooperation.

This mutually beneficial cooperation for the sake of shared national goals automatically gave birth to a common culture, namely 'Indonesian culture'. From this ideal creation, the process of intercultural or cross-cultural fertilization (cross-culture fertilization), is described and fought for, as the characters that characterize the "national personality" of Indonesia are also born. All local wisdom from all regions and the universal ethics of the world's religions adopted by the Indonesian population are combined in the national treasures through a very enriching cross-pollination process (Latif, 2011:372-373).

In practice, there is always a dialectic (call it a tension) between regional elements and nationalism, between nationalism and internationalism (read: globalization), and between customary law and new circumstances. How can this dialectic or tension be managed so that a constructive learning process occurs? Ethnic cultures in Indonesia recognize the "gut attitude" (group harmony), an art of managing conflict which is known in local wisdom in the country by various names, such as "*pela gandong*" (good relation, brotherhood) in Maluku, "*siri'na pacce*" (shame, pride) in Bugis Makassar, "*desa-kala-patra*" (place, time, and condition) in Bali.

In relation to the international world, the nation-state of Indonesia, liberated from colonialism of foreign nations, emphasized that Indonesian nationalism is fighting for and upholding universal humanity: brotherhood, peace, and justice among human beings (Latif, 2011:373). In short, Indonesian nationalism is open to universal humanitarian struggle, which Soekarno described as a 'perfect situation, no oppressed people, no poor people, no poor and miserable people' (Latif, 2011:374).

This imagined and ideal society does require continuous hard work. The work of building togetherness and national unity is not finished – an unfinished nation said

Max Lane (2014). Inter-ethnic conflict, for example, is one of the stories that repeats itself from time to time in the history of our nation. Ethnographically, Parsudi Suparlan, for example, provides this illustration: “Ethnic conflict in Indonesia is basically a conflict between the locals and the migrants. The impact of such conflicts includes many lives lost, the destruction of migrant communities and their environment, and those who live are often forced to leave their homes” (in Bamualim et al., eds., 2002:110). In the same article, Suparlan wrote that “there is an accumulation of hatred against certain ethnic groups, there is also a role for ethnic leaders in the resistance against other ethnic groups” (2002:113).

In the process of sustainable development, Yudi Latif (2009) sees the importance of reflective ability as a dynamic cultural force. Without the development of this ability, which can measure the learning process and renew itself from within, society will move forward like a zombie. Latif’s explanation is thus:

“The growth of his physical appearance was not followed by his spiritual development. We immediately imitate the outward appearance of the progress of modern civilization, without mastering the reasoning system. As good imitators of the world’s fashion developments, we often feel and dress like a developed nation. In fact, substantively, it is like Peterpan who is fixated on the ‘childhood’ phase (jahiliyyah). It could be even worse. In the case of cultural strategies, we tend to retain the bad and discard the good” (2009:22-23).

In the last few decades, we have witnessed the rise of religious primordialism, inward-looking ethnicity, and narrow-minded regional nationalism. Sadly, today’s technocratic age to some extent has contributed to the thickening of such primordial extremism to the stage of the rise of ethnicity against the unity of the nation-state of Indonesia (Rozi et al., 2019). This is exacerbated by the narrow identity politics instigated by groups who enjoy a “culture of hatred,” which Raghieb As-Sirjani calls “war lovers, lovers of violence” (2015:752). In turn, all these hold potential to weaken the integration of the multicultural and multi-religious diversity composing the unique beauty of Indonesian society (cf. Suparlan in Bamualim et al., 2002): a diversity the generation of the founding fathers fought for.

In his book, *Violence and Identity* (2006), Amartya Sen writes the results of his research on the issues of multiculturalism, post-colonialism, fundamentalism, terrorism, and globalization elsewhere in the world by exposing the narrow-minded views of identity. Nikki Slocum-Brandley for instance wrote the following:

“By manipulating the often-unconscious concepts of identity, people stir up hatred and incite violence, including ‘genocide’, against those who were previously neighbors, friends and even family living together in peace” (in Slocum-Brandley, ed., 2008:1).

In order to avoid national disintegration and, on the other hand, to spur the proliferation of cross-pollination, it is certainly necessary to pursue a new cultural strategy, as has been worked out since the Indonesian nation-state was proclaimed (Kleden, 1987:155ss). To create conditions that allow a mutually enriching learning process in all aspects of life is of great importance. The Abu Dhabi Declaration on Human Fraternity identifies the following question referring to the younger generation: "How can the younger generation be made critical to religious and ethnic extremism, the politics of identity, the politics of religious purification, a culture of hatred, and any efforts that promote the patterns of intolerance? How can they be helped time and again to think over Indonesia as a common home imbued with the spirit of peace, equality, kinship, and altruistic love?"

ENCOUNTERING THE 'OTHER'

To respond to challenges of teaching religious adherents to value and even love "the other," the Declaration of Human Fraternity investigates the central and common problems of our contemporary world. The next step then is reflection, introspection, and self-evaluation: perhaps we are part of the problem ourselves. Everyone is invited to share his/her concern for the condition of the present world and humanity which is far from the ideal teachings of any true religion. Human values – truth, virtue, peace, compassion, and non-violence – are the important capitals that can be elaborated to shape the character of young people (students), regardless of their cultural background and faith affiliation. We fully agree to support an educational curriculum that emphasizes the development of the character of the younger generation, their personality, and good attitude towards others. The theme of character is indeed an important part of education, in addition to mastery of knowledge and skills. These three humanistic dimensions, namely character, knowledge, and skills –people may say heart, head, and hands– coupled with the spiritual or faith dimension constitute a comprehensive foundation for education in this country.

The point here is that the responsibility of teachers is not only to transfer knowledge to the students; it is their moral obligation to work out an inclusive way of thinking and behaving within our multicultural and multireligious society. This presupposes a good atmosphere of interpersonal communication between teachers and students, in such a way that the intellectual dimension, skills, and character can be elaborated to its maximum. The role of the teachers is very central in this process of character-building because people do not develop good moral character on their own. This task has always been a complicated enterprise under all extreme conditions (including the covid-19 pandemic as well as instances of radicalism). Whatever the conditions, it is necessary to strive for effective education programs for character building, involving input from teachers as well as public figures, community leaders, and parents.

"Come, follow me," said Jesus, the Divine Teacher, to His disciples (Matt 4:19 and parallel versions). This is an invitation to imitate him in whatever he does and to follow

his instructions. “Learn of me,” he says on another occasion, “for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matt 11:29 and parallel versions).

In Jesus’ School, the disciples learn to internalize supreme values through His example and teachings. The gospel writers who admired the Divine Master perpetuated various narratives about His actions, teachings, and daily rhythms of life. Regarding actions, they tell the story of Jesus empathizing with and defending the weak-poor-sick, siding with those whose dignity has been oppressed (women, sinners, foreigners, minorities). In terms of teaching, they tell of Him who gave new teachings in a new way in such a way that the people were amazed at the ‘newness’ that He showed. Meanwhile, in the rhythm of life, He is said to have a programmed rhythm: work, pray, and rest regularly.

The internalization of values, as everyone knows, does not only occur in the realm of education in schools and other formal institutions but also informally and non-formally in the community and in the family. It is the duty of those in charge of public policy (figures in the government, private sector; communication media: print, audio-visual, digital) to create a conducive society for the education of human values and civility.

As previously mentioned, news of violence, dishonesty, unbelief, greed, hedonic lifestyles, a culture of hatred, and the like often dominate the atmosphere of our society. Today’s technocratic era with an all-connected society has also become an endless field for adventurers of lies and promoters of radicalism (religion, ethnicity, interests). Under these conditions, the younger generation is vulnerable to viral ideologies of hatred. Therefore, they need to be empowered –and to learn to equip themselves– with critical, selective, and evaluative capabilities in dealing with all these destructive social realities.

As the next generation who will be actors of a better tomorrow, they must be capable in appreciating the shared ideals or a lifeway that have been formulated in the second principle of Pancasila, *‘Kemanusiaan yang adil dan beradab,’* the *‘Just and civilized humanity.’* We know that the experience of pain and suffering as a colonized nation, which degraded the dignity of our ancestors for hundreds of years, has encouraged the founders of this country to make ‘humanity’ a very important value, both internally and in international relations.

“Since the beginning of the struggle for independence,” wrote Yudi Latif (2011: 237), “the Indonesian revolution was seen as a humanitarian revolution.” We are reminded that this is not a narrow nationalism, but an inclusive international consciousness. Indonesia was built consciously based on this internationalism. For this reason, the Preamble to the 1945 Constitution contains these animative words: “Indeed, independence is the right of all nations and because of that, colonialism in the world must be abolished because it is not in accordance with humanity and justice.”

This understanding of humanity cannot be separated from the wide association of Soekarno, who loved to learn from world figures of great souls. Latif gave the following note:

Internationalism for Soekarno is the same as 'Humanity', Perikemanusiaan. Opinions like this intersect with various elements of international thought, such as the universal conception of humanity in religions and the movement of socialism in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Soekarno was also inspired by Gandhi who once said that 'My nationality is humanity' (2011: 241).

In order to critically complement Bung Karno's thinking, Bung Hatta (Latif, 2011:241) emphasized that '*Perikemanusiaan*' ('Humanity Precept') is a state guideline that protects the entire Indonesian Indonesia's homeland by promoting general welfare among all strata of Indonesian society. In international relations, on the other hand, this precept serves as a guideline for free and active politics in the context of participating in carrying out a world order based on freedom, eternal peace, and social justice.

The founding fathers of this unitary state of Indonesia succeeded in combining a global vision with local wisdom (Latif, 2011:244). The founders of this nation have given the entire Indonesian people a solid foundation for their future development. These humanist guidelines –with a just and civilized human spirit– are of course relevant to welcoming and celebrating global developments in today's technocratic era. In essence, the principle of "Humanity" in Pancasila must be gratefully appreciated and implemented with a sense of social responsibility in close relationship with the first principle of 'One Almighty Godhead,' both in the realm of formal, informal, and non-formal education. A just and civilized humanity, in our perspective, always has religious values, namely faith and devotion to the Almighty, the Most Gracious, and the Most Merciful God.

As the name implies, informal and non-formal education cannot be assumed by itself to be a conducive and effective field of character building. As mentioned above, the ideals learned in formal education are often not in line with the conditions of the wider community. How can this gap be bridged?

People of goodwill all over the country have made some breakthroughs in the development of young people who are creative, critical, intelligent, skilled, and deep in faith. Many empowering activities have been organized within the ecclesiastical circle, both in schools and in the parishes, and the basic Christian communities. All the educational activities that have been pursued need to have ongoing support from the pastors of the Church and the senior generation. In the current era of dialogue, all internal ecclesiastical activities can always be complemented by themes of interfaith dialogue and the development of productive, inclusive attitudes (cf. Chia, 2019).

In a cooperative relationship with other communities, interfaith activities will strengthen the aspirations of the younger generation of the Church to participate in the struggle for universal human values as stated by the Abu Dhabi Declaration. A sincere and honest interfaith encounter will surely contribute to the formation of a young generation that is sensitive to human problems. This encounter can be manifested in various forms guided by, for example, the various types of dialogue that we have known as (1) dialogue of life, (2) dialogue of action, (3) dialogue of theology, and (4) dialogue of religious experience. The basic spirit of these fourfold dialogue models is 'encounter' which cleanses each participant from paralyzing stereotypes.

True constructive dialogue is realized when people consciously relate to those of other religions. The act of getting along politely by extending friendship with them is a form of true-life dialogue. Christians manifest the values of friendship as taught by the Lord Jesus to His disciples: associating sincerely and often even by appreciating the quality of life of the dialogue partner. Jesus said, for example: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt 5:5). Or, this statement: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God" (Matt 5:9).

In the dialogue of action, Christians work together with other believers in dealing with and overcoming common social problems: a clean-living environment, dealing with the homeless, assisting those who are addicted to drugs, raising funds for the poor, and so on. This interfaith action collaboration is rooted in the belief that every religion has a just and civilized humanitarian mission, free from corrupt and manipulative mentalities. "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy," Jesus taught His disciples (Matt 5:7). Or, these prophetic words: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 5:10).

In theological dialogue, Christians are invited to engage in comparative studies. By dissecting all religious fields, people are trained to appreciate the achievements and religious perspectives of their dialogue counterparts. All negative prejudices and a priori perspectives can be overcome through sincere and honest listening. Through this kind of dialogue, people get various enlightenments and often discern their religious teachings from an enriching new perspective. The Lord Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-21) is an example of the theological dialogue we are referring to. We quote, for instance, these words: "Truly I say to you unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (v. 3). Or, this affirmation: "The wind blows where it wants, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it is coming from or where it is going. So, it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (v. 8).

Meanwhile, in the dialogue of religious experiences –also known as the "dialogue of the heart" – Christians are invited to learn to exchange faith experiences with their dialogue partners. It could happen that these words of Jesus are heard again when we have a dialogue of religious experience: "I say to you, I have never encountered such great faith, not even among the Israelites!" (Lk 7:9). Or, the Lord Jesus' response to the expectation of a Canaanite woman in these words: "Woman, great is your faith; let it

be done to you as you wish” (Matt 15:28 and its parallels). Because of the openness of heart, Christians could gain new spiritual insights from their dialogue partners on their pilgrimage to the Holy. Such training programs are usually very empowering for young people and motivate them to actively participate in interfaith humanitarian activities that promote the values of true fellowship.

SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Abu Dhabi Declaration of Human Fraternity was born out of the shared concern for the faithful, presented by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb. Through this Declaration, the two leaders express their desire to pass on something valuable to the next generation because these young people will be the main actors of tomorrow’s world. How can this animative and promotive invitation be implemented?

First, the adherents of these two major religions (Catholicism and Islam) who believe in goodwill must engage in forums in which they can share their concerns about the current state of world civilization, even if it stands far away from their ideals. All of us (young and old, from East and West, from North and South) are invited to cultivate a ‘sense of connection’ in this ‘common home.’ This attitude of ‘shared responsibility’ is a character that needs to be cultivated, especially by the young generation, who will inherit this world. In the Indonesian context, the genius of the local community can also be used for this noble common goal.

Second, we need to be concerned about the position and role of religion(s) which has not been able to fully advance a civilized society. In fact, from time to time, religion has been used to justify various forms of intolerance, violence, and terror against fellow human beings. Here young people are invited to sincerely admit how religion has been manipulated to satisfy group greeds. It is also the next generation’s responsibility to continue building a dignified society through interfaith collaborations in an empowering ‘culture of dialogue.’

Third, we are still convinced that religion(s) could motivate their adherents to build a dignified civilization, where everyone is valued and respected according to their true dignity, namely the ones loved by their Creator, the Most Merciful *Abba* of all. As believers, young people are invited to remain optimistic about the transformational power of religion(s) for the common good, to be a source of joy and hope (*gaudium et spes*) for the world instead of a source of calamity.

Fourth, everyone and all groups of people are invited to collaborate for a better world, where everyone looks at each other as brothers and sisters. This invitation must enthusiastically be accepted by young people as an opportunity as well as a challenge to interpret life as a sacred calling. If this happens, the Genesis writer’s vision would surely be echoed again: “And God saw that it was all good” (1:10.12.18.21.25). Or these words: “And God saw that all that He had made was very good” (1:31).

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