institut Leimena

CROSS-CULTURAL RELIGIOUS LITERACY

YOU, THE OTHER, AND WHAT YOU DO TOGETHER

Literasi Keagamaan Lintas Budaya

TEMPLETON RELIGION TRUST

CROSS-CULTURAL RELIGIOUS LITERACY

You, The Other, and What You Do Together

Daniel Adipranata
(Editor)

PERKUMPULAN
institut
Leimena

Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy:
You, The Other, and What You Do Together

By: Chris Seiple, et al.

Editor : Daniel Adipranata
Interior design : Rycko Indrawan S.
Cover design : Rycko Indrawan S.

Published by: **Perkumpulan Institut Leimena**
Menara Karya 7th Floor, JL HR Rasuna Said, Blok X-5,
Kavling 1-2, 12950, RT.1/RW.2,
Kuningan, East Kuningan,
Setiabudi, South Jakarta City, Jakarta 12950

Email : info@leimena.org
Website : leimena.org
Phone : (021) 52880355

ISBN: 978-602-61538-7-6

238 hlm. 14 x21 cm

CONTENTS

PART 3: THE COMPARATIVE COMPETENCY

PART 4: THE COLLABORATIVE COMPETENCY

INTRODUCTION

Praise be to Allah, God Almighty for His mercy and grace, so that we can publish a book series entitled "Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy: You, The Other, and What You Do Together." The publication of a series of books in both Indonesian and English aims to increase literature references related to the concept and implementation of Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy (CCRL) in Indonesian society as well as the world.

Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy (CCRL) is an approach to thinking, acting, and acting to be able to work together with different religions and beliefs (collaborative competence), based on an understanding of the moral, spiritual framework, and personal self-knowledge (personal competence) and people. other religions and beliefs (comparative competence).

CCRL is based on the belief that awareness and belief that the common good for humanity will be achieved not when the diversity of religions and beliefs is rejected or merged into uniformity, but precisely when the diversity is affirmed and managed together by different adherents through a process of evaluation, communication, and negotiation. together to respond to various opportunities and challenges faced, both in local and global contexts.

We would like to thank the authors of this Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy book series such as Dr Chris Seiple, Dr Alwi Shihab, Prof Dr Amin Abdullah, Dr Ari Gordon, Rabbi David

Saperstein, Rabbi David Rosen, and Rev. Dr Henriette T. Hutabarat Lebang, and other writers.

We realize that there are still many shortcomings in the writing of this book, for that we expect suggestions and constructive criticism for improvement.

Finally, I hope that this book will be of use to both CCRL training participants, educators in schools, madrasas, universities, policy makers, and the wider community.

Jakarta, June 3, 2022

PART 1

CROSS-CULTURAL RELIGIOUS LITERACY

You, The Other, and What You Do Together

CROSS-CULTURAL RELIGIOUS LITERACY

By Chris Seiple

Executive Summary: There is you, the other, and what you do together. Cross-cultural religious literacy wrestles with a basic question: if solving our common, global, challenges require us to engage with people who do not believe like we do, then what is the framework of engagement? How do we think about engagement? What are the skills of engagement?

This framework of engagement suggests 3 competencies (how to think) and 3 skills (what to do) that can be used in any context, such that mutual respect and trust are built, across the dignity of deep difference, while taking on our global challenges.

It's a framework in which you decide what works best for you. And if you think the framework can be better, then please let us know.

*****

Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy (CCRL) necessarily begins with an understanding of the world as it is—not the world that we would like it to be, or the world that we believe it to be, but the world as it is, in order to engage it effectively, and efficiently...and empathetically.

Our global challenges have two core characteristics. First, there is no single state or non-state actor, no government or non-governmental organization, that can solve our challenges by themselves. Second, as a result, it is not a question of if, but when you partner with somebody different than your organization, different than your country, different than your culture, different than your beliefs.

If such individual and institutional actors will always be present amidst our global challenges—e.g., climate change, terrorism, economic development, etc.—then how will you engage them?

Put differently, what is your practice or philosophy of partnering with the other?

CCRL provides a framework for working with the other—conceptually and literally—in order to address and even solve our common global challenges. CCRL, however, is also a framework that expects and encourages the inclusion of "religion"—as an analytic factor, at the least, and as a force for good, through faith communities that collectively and individually live and work in every sector of society, and the state. Such people of faith will never agree on theology, but they do agree that their faith values should inform their engagement (as do people of other faiths and non-religious philosophies).

So, what does this process of partnership "look like"? How can we each "cross" over to—i.e., move toward—the other without sacrificing the substance of our own beliefs, or theirs? CCRL provides a framework for this discussion—pursuant practical impact. There is you, the other, and what you do together.

*****

Before continuing, however, it is important to say what cross-cultural religious literacy is not. It is not syncretism. In fact, it is the exact opposite. CCRL asks that its participants seek to discern their differences in order to dignify, not demean, the other. Participants in CCRL believe that each human has dignity, even as each human

has the capacity and right to disagree with their neighbor's beliefs and behavior.

CCRL is not secularism. For many of my Muslim friends worldwide, "secularism" means "godless." And most Muslims that I know find it impossible to conceive of a public sphere without God. As a Christian, I feel the same way.

It is also important to say that CCRL is not fluency; nor is it illiteracy. Rather, CCRL is humility. It is knowing just enough to get the questions right about the other. CCRL asks just enough, in order to demonstrate respect toward the "other," who is also one's neighbor.

Put another way: I will never have complete and total fluency to understand another's beliefs, or their culture at the national or village level. I will never understand Asia as someone from Asia does; just as someone from Asia will never understand America as I do. But can we know enough to show respect toward and for each other, so that we can work together and get something done that serves everyone?

In other words, CCRL is about possessing the humility to Listen, Observe, Verify, and then Engage, that is, to L.O.V.E., practically, for the sake of everyone. To say it yet one more way: you listen and observe with your heart, you verify with your head, and you engage with your hands.

*****

CCRL has three competencies: personal, comparative, and collaborative. These competencies help you to think about the process of engagement—i.e., the process of understanding yourself, the other as s/he understands her/himself, and the context in which you might practically partner.

It is not easy. Because we are all humans, we all have stereotypes. Stereotypes are more likely when rely only on what we've been told about the religious other, instead of seeking to listen to understand, to understand them as they understand themselves.

Personal competency is understanding and accounting for yourself: internally, and in the words and actions you speak and do, externally, as a result. One can read one's own holy scriptures and be taught in class about the other, but often true internal understanding does not take place until you travel outside your family and country.

I remember going to the Registan in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. It is an iconic setting, where many intellectual giants of Islam's Golden Age lived. I remember standing among some statues of them—e.g., Ulugh Begh, al-Biruni, etc.—and thinking to myself: why have I never heard of them?

Such questions begged more questions about how I was educated, and what I believed. What were my moral beliefs, and what did my beliefs as a Christian, say about engaging somebody who had a very different worldview, but a worldview so intellectually and theologically rich that I would be stupid if I did not learn from it?

I remember watching some women weave a silk rug at the Registan, a rug that would take nine months to complete. They had a very different concept of time and space. In America we want everything now. We want McDonald's food now. If I don't get the food in five minutes, I'm mad.

(Besides the fact that the food is bad for me.)

So, you begin to learn things about the other, but what it's really teaching you is about yourself.

What do I believe? What do I think? What do my beliefs say about engaging the other?

After some internal reflection, in such situations, one cannot help but genuinely consider the local people, and how do they think, and why. So, then you have to start thinking, well what does the other person think?

I remember traveling to Indonesia in January 2017, and meeting with Dr. Ahmad Syafii Maarif. It was very clear that he had to be my teacher. He had to teach me. He gave me his book, which I quote:

> "...being religious in a civilized way is the same as being religious in an honest, sincere, and generous way. By "generous" I mean that the principle of pluralism is important; it shows in our willingness to recognize the rights of others to hold that the greatest truth resides in their respective religions, even if we do not agree with them. At the same time, other people must respect the position of Muslims who say that Islam is the truest religion.
>
> The expression "truest" must be understood in the light of the distinct beliefs of each adherent. It is uncivilized and it disturbs the peace to say, "Our religion is the truest and your religion is packed with myths and confused beliefs."[1]

Dr. Maarif is saying that we must respect the right of others to hold that the greatest truth resides in their religion, even if we do not agree with them. At the same time, other people must respect the position of Muslims, who say that Islam is the truest religion.

Seems fair.

Maarif also says it's uncivilized to express disagreement with the religious doctrines or practices of others in a way that is rude and disrespectful, and that undermines the basic civility that we all need in society. In other words, disrespecting the other not only goes against your faith, but it is bad for your country. More importantly, when you say things that are needlessly insulting about the other person's faith, you actually are speaking against your own faith. Because you're putting somebody else down, someone else that God made.

And this is what Dr. Maarif has taught me. To think about pluralism in this fashion, not as syncretic, not as secular, but as a public square like in Samarkand's Registan, where everybody comes together as common citizens of a country.

I also learned this fundamental thinking from K.H. Abdul Muhaimin, a member of Nahdlatul Ulema. He told me: "The Quran

1 Ahmad Syaffii Maarif, *Islam Humanity and the Indonesian Identity* (Leiden University Press, 2018), 33.

teaches us to honor all of humanity, that we are all descendants of Adam."

I had a teacher from Muhammadiyah, and a teacher from Nahdlatul Ulama, saying the same thing, even as they taught me about how to understand them, as they understood themselves. This is the comparative competency.

*****

When we exercise our personal and comparative competencies, we position ourselves to move past the stereotypes of each other, even as we discover common values through which we can work together on very practical things.

For example, several years ago I was blessed with the opportunity to work with the Chinese government and the Tibetan Diaspora.

It took five years of relationship building before we convened a gathering of government officials to meet with some Tibetan NGOs in Chengdu. They met because they both had a common interest: how to practically address the desertification of Tibet. Among the Tibetans were literal "grassroots" NGOs who wanted to bring the grasslands back to Tibet. The representatives from China's capital, Beijing, were two women, both ethnically Han Chinese, and both officially atheist.

Put differently, the top-down representatives of the Chinese government (and of the majority ethnic group) were meeting the bottom-up leaders of the (literal) grassroots communities who cared deeply for their land—in part, as a function of their Buddhist faith.

And so, this meeting took place after years of trust building, to see about how they could, literally, create new grassroots in the soil, so that things could grow again.

But they had a common interest to make the sand dunes produce food again for all citizens in the public square, irrespective of their faith.

Why did this meeting work? Because it had been built on many previous meetings. We knew about each other; we did not let stereotypes guide us, but our own understanding of ourselves and our neighbors, as they understood themselves. Despite the deep differences present, there was a mutual respect among all parties.

Another example comes from my friend Akram Khan Durrani. In 2002, he was freely elected as the Chief Minister of the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan, now known as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Through some common friends, he visited me in the United States in July of 2005. He invited me to visit him in Peshawar in October 2005, and again in 2006, when we decided to co-host a conference about Islam and Christianity in May of 2007.

He is truly my friend. We truly do not agree on many things. But we love each other and because of that respect and love that grew over time, over those two years, he decided that he wanted to have a conference, and he asked for my help.

The night before the conference he hosted a dinner for us. But my friend, instead of just inviting Muslims and Christians, decided that he would invite leaders from all the faith communities of his province. He invited Shia and Ishmaeli, very small minorities in his part of the world. But he also invited the Hindu and Sikh leaders, who represented even smaller minorities.

After the conference, the Hindu and Sikh leaders came up to me and said: "We want to apologize for taking twice the speaking time allotted to us...and we want to thank you."

I asked why. "This is the first time that we have been able to speak as fellow Pakistanis from our tradition, into the public square, to share how our faith wants to build and support all Pakistanis, no matter their faith or politics."

At that moment I understood the purpose of good governance. The purpose of democratic government is to provide the table, and

to ensure that everybody gets a seat. The purpose of government is to make sure that the non-majorities always get a seat.

As a Pashtun and Muslim, my friend could have invited people who looked and believed like he did. But it is the responsibility of the majority to make sure that the non-majorities have a seat at the table. That is the only way that we can truly understand and respect each other as a function of our own belief.

Of course, I have a responsibility to live out these values in my own culture, where I am a member of the ethno-religious majority. I am a Christian, Protestant, in America. It is my responsibility to make sure that the non-majority has a seat at the table.

I have always worked closely with my Muslim friends, Sunni and Shia and Sufi. Through these relationships I have a friend from Texas by the name of Rashad Hussein. President Biden nominated him to be the sixth (and first Muslim) U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom. He is qualified. He's the former special envoy to the OIC. He's worked in counterterrorism and serves on the national security council. But there are still some stereotypes about Muslims in America.

So a Texas pastor and I wrote an op-ed published in Dallas, affirming and asking the U.S Senate to approve unanimously, our friend Rashad Hussain as ambassador. In January 2022, Rashad was confirmed by the U.S. Senate as America's Ambassador for International Religious Freedom.

The majority has a responsibility to support the minority and to make sure they have a seat at the table, always. You have to live out your beliefs. Otherwise, you are hollow; and you will not have opportunity to address the practical challenges we all face, in a sustainable way.

These three competencies—personal, comparative, and collaborative—provide a framework for how to think through how *you* live out *your* faith, in the context of your neighbors' many faiths.

There are also three skills to help implement that framework: evaluation, negotiation, and communication.

*****

I cannot hope to get anything done in this world without evaluating the context where I am. Such an evaluation, however, begins with oneself. I have found that the simultaneous evaluation of the internal and external contexts is good for both.

I once met the head of the largest madrassah in Peshawar, Pakistan. He did not like America. But he met with me because we had a common friend in the Chief Minister. We had a conversation that was as candid as it was courteous.

He said something to me that I will never forget: "You Americans want respect, we want tenderness." I still think about that. But it was the kind of comment that forced me to evaluate how he had come to that conclusion; which, in turn, made me evaluate myself and my country.

Evaluation never stops.

*****

Next there is the skill of negotiation. It too takes place internally and externally. One time there was an "incident" in Northwest Vietnam, where a local villager had converted to Christianity. It was receiving much attention in Washington, D.C., and, because of the trust that I had with the Vietnamese government, I suggested to them that I should go to the village.

They said: "We can't do that. That's a very sensitive area regarding ethno-religious minorities, and it's right on the Chinese border." So, we began to negotiate. I told them that I did not pick the place because the place had picked me. I asked: "Do you want to look bad over this incident? You need somebody that Americans in the American Congress trust to visit and see for themselves to

verify. The Congress is not going to trust you." The government allowed me to visit, and I was able to evaluate the situation in an honest manner.

But one negotiation always leads to another. Once I got there, I had to negotiate with the village elders, looking and listening (evaluating) as I did. Here's what I found: of course, the person who converted had a right to convert; but he had done so in a manner disrespectful to the village culture and the ancestors they worshipped.

I told this story, honestly, such that all parties felt that "their" side of the story was told appropriately. It was only possible because we were able to negotiate with each other, deciding that everyone could "win" if an independent observer told the story.

Experiences like this one, however, can't help but make you look inside yourself, asking: "What do I believe? What would I have done? Should I change anything about myself as a result?" In other words, as you engage, you learn more about, even negotiate, your own identity.

*****

The third skill is communication. One time I was asked to speak in a madrassah in Bannu, right on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

I had no idea what to do...so I prayed.

I asked God for guidance and I felt Him whisper "Psalm 11:7"... from the Zabur, the psalms of King Daoud, King David. It says: "For the Lord is righteous. He loves justice. The upright will seek His face." So I spoke about what that verse meant to me.

Did I water down the differences between our faiths? No. But I spoke about a common value that we both had, justice.

Justice.

What does that look like in the town of Bannu? What does

that look like in my town in Virginia? What does that look like in Indonesia? These are the must-have conversations of our global village.

We have to find ways to work together, in order to serve the common good.

*****

To summarize: There is you, the other and what you do together. You must have a framework of engagement—of competencies (how to think) and skills (what to do)—if you want to get stuff done that helps everyone.

Engaging the world as it is—especially its challenges—demands partnerships. Those partnerships will include people of faith. Many of those people will agree with you; and many will not.

You will need a framework of engagement, that is, the competencies and skills of cross-cultural religious literacy. This literacy is not fluency nor illiteracy, but a humility to listen, observe, verify, and engage. Listen and observe with your heart. Verify with your mind. Engage with your hands.

Of course, Indonesia already knows these points. A dear friend of mine, Lamin Sanneh, now deceased, once said: "Islam in Indonesia is like the colorfully designed shirts that Indonesia is famous for—the Batik. Batik Islam is an Islam whose structure and fabric is the same but whose application varies with local color. It looks good on us and is good for us."

And I thought, I hope that somebody says that about my faith someday.

There are common tenets, common beliefs, core beliefs that never change in Islam—this is the shirt itself. But they vary locally as they're applied—this is the color and design of the shirt.

But because I wear a Batik doesn't make me an expert on Indonesia. It just means that I'm trying to be literate enough—that is,

I'm trying to be respectful, and sensitive, hopefully communicating that I love your country and I love your Batiks.

But the Batik is an interesting analogy for how we think about religion and how it is lived locally.

Because we have to understand the other as they understand themselves.

So, Batik Islam is about expressing one's faith because you're humbly confident in it. That is, you are not threatened by the different faiths of others.

The result is the common capacity to interact locally out of mutual respect. This Batik capacity is rooted in the tremendous tradition that you have, dating back to the youth pledge of 1928.

Your ancestors consciously chose to be Indonesian, even though the majority of you are Muslims. You chose to make room at the table for non-Muslims, for non-majorities.

This is exactly the model that we need all around the world. If we can live this model, then the world will be a safer, happier, and more resilient. It will have more peace. It will be a world in which everyone enjoys full freedom of religion and belief, while also living out civic virtues and voluntarily exercising moral responsibility in how they use their liberty.

And to say it one more time, this Batik Islam, as with Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy, is not to water down the differences between faith traditions. It is to be strong theologically, to be authentic in your own faith; so strong that you are not threatened by another's faith. Which is also to say, simply, there are things in life on which you will never agree with others of different beliefs.

Such an approach to life is the "gado-gado way."

In America we have a saying that we are a melting pot. I have never liked this phrase because if you're melting, in a pot, that means you all become the same. In government policy language, you might call this assimilation. Everybody has to look like the majority.

I think that is wrong, theologically and politically. We don't want to be melted together, we do not want to be the same. The Gado-gado salad is integration.

Gado-gado says: "Don't blend and become the same; instead bring the essence of your identity, the essence of your ingredient. Do not to lose your flavor, do not to lose your identity. When we're together we are better because we are bigger than the sum of our parts."

This is the gift of Indonesia. This is what the world needs now, more than ever. Thank you for listening patiently to an American who loves your country.

*This document has been prepared for the Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy (LKLB, for its acronym in Indonesian) program, October 2021 – June 2022

A CASE FOR CROSS-CULTURAL RELIGIOUS LITERACY

By Chris Seiple and Dennis R. Hoover

Abstract: Cross-cultural religious literacy is a comprehensive approach to understanding and conducting the kind of engagement that distinguishes robust, covenantal pluralism from merely indifferent "tolerance" of diversity. Such an approach teaches, respectively, the personal and comparative competencies of knowledge about self, and about the other, as well as the collaborative context in which this knowledge is applied. This approach also teaches the skills—evaluation, negotiation, and communication—of moving toward the other such that shared goals can be identified and implemented.

Translation and citation info: This is an Indonesian translation of a research paper commissioned as part of a project supported by the Issachar Fund, the Templeton Religion Trust, and the Institute for Global Engagement. This translated paper is for noncommercial educational use only. The English language version of record is published in *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Spring 2021): 1-13, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15570274.2021.1874165.

It was never our intention to go to Pakistan. But one day, in the fall of 2003, the Institute for Global Engagement (IGE), where we both worked and are still affiliated, received a guest who asked: "I don't know what you do—I think you build bridges—but how would you like to travel to Peshawar, Pakistan, and engage the newly elected Chief Minister of the Northwest Frontier Province?"[1] It would have been easy to say no. IGE was only three years old. As a think-and-do-tank, IGE was busy building new educational programs while also building relationships that would eventually yield forums across Asia on religion and the rule of law, security, and citizenship. And we had just founded *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*.

Chris sought some advice. Early in 2004, Chris had lunch with Akbar Ahmed, the longtime Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies and Professor of International Relations at American University. When asked how to think about this opportunity to expand IGE's work to Pakistan, particularly the area along the Afghanistan border between Peshawar and Bannu where he had served as a Pakistani civil servant, Akbar replied: "I've been a Pashtun for 3,000 years, a Muslim for 1,400, and a Pakistani for 57."

Akbar's point was succinct and profound. Akbar knew who he was. He was fluent in his culture, his faith, and his country—across time and space. Were we literate in who we were, much less the peoples of the Northwest Frontier, and their faith traditions? Could we understand ourselves, and could we muster the will and skills to truly understand the Pashtun Muslim people of Pakistan?

Akbar was saying that to engage the Pashtun-Muslim culture in Northwest Pakistan successfully—that is, to develop and implement sustainable projects, together—we would need much more than good intentions, much more than surface level familiarity with the country. As with any engagement, we would have to review motivations and interests, ours, and theirs. We had to think through what we thought about ourselves, and what we believed about engaging a people and

culture so different than our own. We also had to think about those people and their culture, and how they understood themselves; *and*, how they understood engaging a people and culture so different than their own. And then, as a result, we had to think through what goals we might develop and implement with them.

We had the *will* to develop a deepening competency about ourselves, the Pashtuns, and what we might do together; but, frankly, we did not have the *skills*. In his first meeting with the Chief Minister of the Northwest Frontier Province, Chris found himself asking: "Why do you do what you do?" The Chief Minister responded: "I believe that the Creator will hold me accountable for the way I govern my people." Chris did not expect that answer, let alone concurring that he believed the same thing too (even though he also knew that he had serious theological and political differences with the Chief Minister). But there Chris was: totally unprepared to evaluate, negotiate, and/or communicate the moment, because he did not have the skills to be competent in himself, the other, and what might be done together.

And so began a learning process that continues to this day. Chris eventually made several trips to Pakistan, making many friends, with whom IGE subsequently worked on various innovative projects (e.g., a fellows program at the University of Science and Technology in Bannu). This process of partnership took place faster because both parties sought to know their own faith and culture at their richest and deepest best, and enough about the other's faith and culture to demonstrate genuine respect (not merely "tolerance") for the essence of the other's identity. This respect was for each other's inherent dignity, and genuinely held beliefs (while not implying any blanket endorsement of the other's beliefs). Across different ethnic and political cultures, as well as irreconcilable theological differences, they learned how to agree to disagree, agreeably, and therefore how to work together, practically.

This model and mindset, encouraged by similar experiences in other countries, set the organizing pattern for IGE's work in its early

years, and continues to guide its work in challenging contexts around the world—China, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Uzbekistan, Northern Iraq, and parts of Northern and Eastern Africa—as well as its Center for Women, Faith & Leadership, which ensures that gender is an integral dimension of IGE's engagement in each place. In each of these situations, the key has always been the same: seeking first to understand the essence of one's own, as well as the other's, identity before engaging to create a relationship capable of discovering common values, and common interests, pursuant a common project.

IGE did not use the phrase "cross-cultural religious literacy" to describe what it was doing, but, in reflection, it is a phrase that captures the core of IGE's ethos and methodology of engagement. As our writings and conferences suggest across IGE's first 20 years, we were and continue to constantly assess and analyze ourselves, as well as our potential partners and their context, before applying ideas developed together. We have also sought to equip others worldwide, of any religion or no religion, to similarly consider and include religion—in their academic disciplines and professional sectors—at least as an analytic factor, understanding that religion can potentially be, depending on the context, a tremendous force for good, or ill.[2]

Global Context

Scholarly specialists in religious studies have of course long argued for the value of education about comparative religion. But it wasn't until after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, that a broader sense of urgency about religious literacy began to take root. Moreover, the processes of globalization—and reactions to those processes—over the ensuing two decades have only further heightened the need for cross-cultural religious literacy across virtually every sector of society and governance, domestically and transnationally.

Globalization is many things, but it seems to have two primary, sometimes countervailing, effects. First, and most practically,

globalization creates or exacerbates problems that can only be solved through broad-based partnership. Today's interrelated global challenges—from trade to terrorism, climate change to counterproliferation, development to deterrence, and health(care) to human rights—demand different perspectives, as well as different partnerships among individuals and institutions that will not share the same faith background or worldview orientation. We believe that in a world where no global challenge can be solved by a single state or non-state actor, it is not a question of *if* but *when* you partner with an individual or institution that does not think, act, or believe as you do.

In other words, no matter our different spiritual epistemologies and/or ethical frameworks, it is in our collective self-interest to find a way to work together. Which is also to say—consciously or sub-consciously—each of us will possess a different point of moral departure that de facto exercises a philosophy of the other in building practical partnerships. Our global engagement pursuant our self-interest cannot help but reflect what we believe about someone else, a needed partner, who doesn't believe as we do.

Globalization's second effect is its constant impact on identity. The continuous transfer of information and increase in mobility accelerated by globalization inevitably challenges how we understand and conceive of ourselves, the other, and the world. In the best of circumstances, encounter and principled engagement with different religious and philosophical frameworks strengthens our identity as we consider teachings and thinking that, despite differences, can anchor our spiritual/moral identity in the other (i.e., the Golden Rule).

But we also know that information can be manipulated to play upon and/or create real and alleged threats to our identity. Much too often, sadly, people cannot live out their identity because their beliefs are construed as a threat. Annually since 2007 the Pew Research Center has been measuring government restrictions on religion around the world. In 2018 (the most recent year for which full data are available),

religious restrictions reached an all-time high (Pew Research Center 2020). The total number of countries with "high" or "very high" levels of government restrictions also increased, rising from 52 in 2017 to 56 in 2018. Pew also reports an index of social hostilities involving religion. In 2018 this index was down slightly—but only after having reached an all-time high in 2017.

Given such repression and hostility it is perhaps not surprising that our world is now experiencing the most displaced people since World War II. According to the United Nations, over 80 million people have been displaced from their home (UNHCR 2020). Too often, people are fleeing conflict where religion has seemingly been used to validate the power of one group (often the ethno-religious majority) against another (usually ethno-religious minorities) (Theodorou 2014; see also Falk 2019 and C. Seiple 2016).

These two combined and countervailing effects of globalization—a need for partnership when we are unwilling (no will) and/or unable (no skills) to partner because of (perceived) threats to our respective identities—yield a world of conceptual, geographic, and spiritual disruption and dislocation. It is hard to work together when our identity is defined against, and/or as under threat from, the other. Inevitably, people suffer, ask why, and yearn for meaning.

Globally, religion remains a pervasive force, one that can be used for good and bad. As such, the stakes for cross-cultural religious literacy, and *ill*iteracy, are high. As Stephen Prothero, a leader in the field of religious literacy, has written: "religious illiteracy is more dangerous because religion is the most volatile constituent of culture, because religion has been, in addition to one of the greatest forces for good in world history, one of the greatest forces for evil" (Prothero 2007, 17).[3]

The Emerging Field of Religious Literacy

In the American context, the field of religious literacy crossed a threshold of public awareness in 2007, with the publication of

several key books. The most widely cited is the *New York Times* bestselling *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know About Religion—But Doesn't*, by Prothero. Prothero wrote *Religious Literacy* "to produce citizens who know enough about Christianity and the world's religions to participate meaningfully—on both the left and the right—in religiously inflected public debates." His was not a favoritism of Christianity but simply a naming of a fact: various understandings of Christianity played an instrumental role in the founding and evolution of the United States. One cannot, Prothero argued, be a fully engaged citizen of the U.S. unless one is functionally literate about its history, a history which Biblical diction and theological doctrine played a vital part in shaping (and still does). Prothero defined religious literacy as "the ability to understand and use in one's day-to-day life the basic building blocks of religious traditions—key terms, symbols, doctrines, practices, sayings characters, metaphors, and narratives" (Prothero 2007, 12).

Diane Moore—another leader in the emergent field of religious literacy—agrees that facts about religion are important, and that they should be taught in America's public schools (also for the sake of citizenship). But she felt it imperative to add that facts about religion do not exist in isolation. They should be situated and understood in context. For example, an understanding of suffering is instrumental to the Christian faith; but that understanding, and how it shapes eventual application, will likely differ according to the socio-cultural and historical contexts of whether the group of believers is part of the ethnic majority or minority (e.g., white and black churches in America). Moreover, these contexts also had to be taught, and how they were taught must be given conscious and ongoing reflection.

In her 2007 book, *Overcoming Religious Illiteracy: A Cultural Studies Approach to the Study of Religion in Secondary Education*, Moore made a threefold case for the multi-disciplinary approach of cultural studies and its effort to name the relevant lenses, situated

facts, and inherent biases. This holistic approach (Moore 2007, 5) assumes that:

- "[W]ithout a basic understanding of the beliefs, symbols, literature, and practices related to the world's religious traditions, much of history and culture is rendered incomprehensible. Religion has always been and continues to be woven into the fabric of cultures and civilizations in ways that are inextricable. The failure to recognize this fact impoverishes our understanding of human experience and sends the false message that religion is primarily an individual as opposed to a social phenomenon."
- "[R]eligious worldviews provide alternative frameworks from which to critique normative cultural assumptions. … [T]he study of religion can serve to enhance rather than thwart critical thinking and cultural imagination regarding human agency and capacity."
- "[K]nowledge of the basic tenets and structures of the world's religions is essential to a functioning democracy in our increasingly pluralistic age."

Moore (2007, 56) went on to define religious literacy as

> the ability to discern and analyze the fundamental intersections of religion and social/political/cultural life through multiple lenses. Specifically, a religiously literate person will possess 1) a basic understanding of the history, central texts, beliefs, practices, and contemporary manifestations of several of the world's religious traditions as they arose out of and continue to be shaped by particular social, historical, and cultural contexts; and 2) the ability to discern and explore the religious dimensions of political, social, and cultural expressions across time and place… This understanding of religious literacy emphasizes

> a method of inquiry more than specific content knowledge, though familiarity with historical manifestations is an important foundation for understanding the intersections of religion with other dimensions of human social life.

These influential writings set the pattern for what followed in the emerging field of religious literacy: an American K-12 emphasis on understanding the other, but not necessarily the (role of) self during engagement of the other. For example, also in 2007, the First Amendment Center published *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Schools* (Haynes and Thomas 2007). They argued that general education is woefully incomplete without imparting at least basic knowledge of religion, and they challenged the widespread misunderstanding of the Constitutional separation of church and state as somehow barring teaching *about* religion (from a nonsectarian point of view).

In 2010 the American Academy of Religion (AAR) issued its *Guidelines for Teaching about Religion in K-12 Public Schools in the United States*. Produced by an AAR task force chaired by Diane Moore, the *Guidelines* articulated its rationale for religious literacy education as follows: "Illiteracy regarding religion 1) is widespread, 2) fuels prejudice and antagonism, and 3) can be diminished by teaching about religion in public schools using a non-devotional, academic perspective, called religious studies" (AAR Religion in the Schools Task Force 2010). Building on this achievement, in 2011 Moore began laying the groundwork for a Religious Literacy Project based at Harvard Divinity School.

In 2015, Adam Dinham and Matthew Francis published their edited book, *Religious Literacy in Policy and Practice*, in which they argued (Dinham and Francis 2015, 257, 266, 270) that religious literacy "is a stretchy, fluid concept that is variously configured and applied in terms of the context in which it happens… [R]eligious literacy is necessarily a non-didactic idea that must be adapted as appropriate to the specific

environment." They further concluded that

> religious literacy lies in having the knowledge about at least some religious traditions, and an awareness of and ability to find out about others. Its purpose is to avoid stereotypes, engage, respect, and learn from others, and build good relations across difference. *In this it is a civic endeavor rather than a religious one, and seeks to support a strong multifaith society, that is inclusive of people from all faith traditions and none*, within a context that is largely suspicious and anxious about religion and belief.… [emphasis added]

Accordingly, religious literacy "is best understood as a framework to be worked out in context. In this sense, it is better to talk of religious literacies in the plural than literacy in the singular."

Also in 2015, Moore founded the Religious Literacy Project at Harvard Divinity School, which among other things has sought to apply religious literacy in various professional fields, running symposia on topic areas such as media and entertainment, journalism, immigration services, and humanitarian action. For example, a 2017 study with Oxfam looked at the religious literacy of faith-based relief & development NGOs (Gingerich et al. 2017). Moore also added the consideration of "power and powerlessness" to her method for exploring religious literacy, suggesting that questions had to be asked about "which perspectives are politically and socially prominent," and why (Moore 2015).

In 2017, the U.S. National Council for Social Studies, through the support of the AAR and the Religious Freedom Center, added religious studies to its "C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards" (National Council for Social Studies 2017). Reflecting on this Framework, Religious Freedom Center Director (at the time) Charles Haynes remarked: "Religious literacy is critical for sustaining the American experiment in religious liberty and diversity. Only by educating students about religions and beliefs in ways that are constitutionally and academically sound can the

United States continue to build one nation out of many cultures and faiths" (National Council for Social Studies n.d.).

In 2018 the emerging field of religious literacy began to consider global application, as well as the role of the one seeking religious literacy about the other. The Religious Freedom Center's Benjamin Marcus, for example, warned against a linguistic mirror-imaging of the religious other while engaging him/her. Marcus (2018) noted that "Americans read the world fluently using their own religious language, but many are incapable of understanding the language of the religious other in public life." To truly understand and respect the other "requires the ability to parse religious language and to analyze how individuals and communities value each component with their religious identities."

Religious literacy education has also begun to expand beyond K-12 to address higher education. Douglas Jacobsen and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen pointed the way in their important 2012 book, *No Longer Invisible: Religion in University Education*. One example of the growing interest in religious literacy at the university level came in January of 2018, when Chris taught "Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy & Leadership in an Age of Partnership" for the first time at the University of Washington's Jackson School of International Studies. This class resulted from Chris' experiences at IGE as well as a "Bridging the Gap" grant from the Carnegie Endowment meant to help the academy become more relevant to policymakers. Through this class, and his work with the Templeton Religion Trust, Chris began to think through how religious literacy begins with the self, and how it is applied globally with the other, in different contexts (See C. Seiple 2018a, 2018b). In March 2019, the University of Washington Board of Regents unanimously approved "Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy" as a graduate certificate.[4]

The recognition of religious literacy as a priority in higher education took another step forward in November 2019, when the

AAR published its "Religious Literacy Guidelines: What U.S. College Graduates Need to Know about Religion." Echoing the catalytic work of Diane Moore, who co-chaired the report, the AAR (2019) states:

> Religious literacy helps us understand ourselves, one another, and the world in which we live. It includes the abilities to:
>
> - Discern accurate and credible knowledge about diverse religious traditions and expressions
> - Recognize the internal diversity within religious traditions
> - Understand how religions have shaped—and are shaped by—the experiences and histories of individuals, communities, nations, and regions
> - Interpret how religious expressions make use of cultural symbols and artistic representations of their times and contexts
> - Distinguish confessional or prescriptive statements made by religions from descriptive or analytical statements

Later, in Appendix B of the guidelines, the AAR, taking more notice of the person seeking to engage the religious other, defined religious literacy as

> the ability to discern and analyze the role of religion in personal, social, political, professional, and cultural life. Religious literacy fosters the skills and knowledge that enable graduates to participate—in informed ways—in civic and community life; to work effectively and collaboratively in diverse contexts; to think reflectively about commitments to themselves and others; and to cultivate self-awareness.

In October 2020, Moore also launched the Master of Religion and Public Life degree program at Harvard Divinity School to

"advance the public understanding of religion in service of a just world at peace."[5]

Implications

By way of summary thus far, there are several dimensions to "religious literacy" in its fullest sense. The first is recognition of the implicit difference between diversity and pluralism. Diversity is the presence of difference. It is side-by-side tolerance. Diana Eck, director of the Harvard Pluralism Project, writes:

> Pluralism is not diversity alone, but the energetic engagement with diversity. Diversity can and has meant the creation of religious ghettoes with little traffic between or among them. Today, religious diversity is a given, but pluralism is not a given; it is an achievement. (Eck n.d.)

The second key element, accordingly, is engagement. If we want to move beyond tolerance, we will need the will and skills to engage. Engagement requires an understanding of the other's motivations and interests, and some self-awareness of one's own. Engaging a religious actor is no different than engaging a secular one—the process still requires an understanding of what you and the other party seek, and why. "Religious literacy" at the least is a tool for understanding the religious other. Certainly, Prothero, Moore, and Marcus, among others, would begin there.

But, it is also true that most writers would agree that context is at the heart of "religious literacy" as a means to understanding, if not application. Judgment and flexibility are therefore vital characteristics, as individuals, situations, and contexts vary. (Flexibility is also important because, as the above survey indicates, religious literacy itself is an evolving concept.) And if religious literacy is context-dependent, then it is inevitably also about *relationships*. Such extrapolative logic suggests that the religious

literacy necessary to engage the other requires multi-level and multi-directional understanding—including understanding of the situation and place, and, understanding of oneself, as one comes into relationship with the other and the place.

Religious literacy, therefore, is relational even as it implicitly, given the many unknowns, demands a humble approach in its desire to cross from mere tolerance of diversity to proactive and nonrelativistic pluralism, through mutual engagement. In fact, it is a civic responsibility. In his discussion of "deep pluralism," William Connolly (2005, 64-65) writes:

> In the ideal case each faith thereby *embeds* the religious virtue of hospitality and the civic virtue of presumptive generosity into its relational practices. It inserts relational modesty into its ritual practices to amplify one side of its own faith—the injunction to practice hospitality toward other faiths coexisting with it—and to curtail pressures within it to repress or marginalize other faiths. To participate in the public realm does not now require you to leave your faith at home in the interests of secular reason (or one of its surrogates); it involves mixing into the relational practice of faith itself a preliminary readiness to negotiate with presumptive generosity and forbearance in those numerous situations where recourse to the porous rules of commonality across faiths, public procedure, reason, or deliberation are insufficient to the issue at hand…
>
> Negotiation of such an ethos of pluralism, first, honors the embedded character of faith; second, gives expression to a fugitive element of care, hospitality, or love for differences simmering in most faiths; third, secures specific faiths against persecution; and, fourth, offers the best opportunity for diverse faiths to coexist without violence while supporting the civic conditions of common governance. It does not issue in a simple universalism in which one image of transcendence

> sets the standard everywhere or in a cultural relativism in which one faith prevails here and another there. It is neither universalism nor relativism in the simple mode of each. It is deep pluralism.

Such an interconnected web of relationships between and among religious (and non-religious) people requires, as Connolly emphasizes, the skill of negotiation. Negotiation, however, begins with the skill of evaluation (i.e., the capacity to assess and analyze the various dynamics at play); and commences and ends with the skill of communication (how something is said, or not said, is often more important than what is said). This web of relationships also requires, as Connolly suggests, the best of one's values, as well as a keen understanding of the power dynamics at play (which can result in violence, if not managed properly).

Certainly, this has been our experience in our work with IGE over the years. We always found good people everywhere, engaging according to the best of their faith and conscience, and as a civic responsibility, living out the values of charity, hospitality, and respect toward the (religious) other. But it is also true that we always found contentious issues that invariably pointed back to the local power dynamic between the ethnic and/or religious majority and the ethnic and/or religious minorities. For example, access to education, worship, and good development were often part and parcel of the majority-minority power relationship. A holistic approach to religious literacy requires situated knowledge—a knowledge that is not only academic but also contextual and relational.

Of course, such dynamics are part of the human condition. James C. Scott's important scholarship on the history of the people of upland Southeast Asia provides vivid examples of such majority-minority power relations. In *The Art of Not Being Governed*, Scott (2009, 13, 19, 20, 27, 155, 158, 337) writes:

> The attempt to bring the periphery into line is read by representatives of the sponsoring state as providing civilization and progress—where progress is, in turn, read as the intrusive propagation of the linguistic, agricultural, and religious practices of the dominant ethnic group: the Han, the Kinh, the Burman, the Thai…. In the precolonial period, the resistance can be seen in a cultural refusal of lowland patterns and in the flight of lowlanders seeking refuge in the hills…. The hills, however, are not simply a space of political resistance but also a zone of cultural refusal…. Treatment of lowland cultures and societies as self-contained entities (for example, "Thai civilization," "Chinese culture") replicates the unreflective structure of scholarship and, in doing so, adopts the hermetic view of culture that lowland elites themselves wish to project. The fact is that hill and valley societies have to be read against each other to make any sense…. *The religious "frontier" beyond which orthodoxy could not easily be imposed was therefore not so much a place or defined border as it was a relation to power—that varying margin at which state power faded appreciably … Religious identity in this case is a self-selected boundary-making device designed to emphasize political and social difference …* The valley imagination has its history wrong. Hill peoples are not pre-anything. In fact, they are better understood as post-irrigated rice, postsedentary, postsubject, and perhaps even postliterate. They represent, in the longue durée, a reactive and purposeful statelessness of peoples who have adapted to a world of states while remaining outside their firm grasp. [emphasis added]

Nuanced understandings of power dynamics (including racial dynamics), and how they impact local self-understanding, are essential to meaningful mutual engagement. Put differently, Scott's description of lowland and highland Southeast Asia suggests the kind of questions that a holistic approach to religious literacy must ask of

the context, and the potential partners involved, ever appreciating the situated knowledge, as well as one's own self-understanding, and the interaction between them. In short: it's complicated, fluid, and evolving.

From Academic to Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy: Competencies & Skills

Cross-cultural religious literacy demands that one be reflective about one's philosophy/theology of the other, toward practical and positive engagement in a multi-faith, globalizing world that will require multi-faith partners to serve the common good. Put simply, we must first understand ourselves (a personal competency), then understand others as they understand themselves (a comparative competency), and then understand the nature and requirements of leadership in crossing cultural and religious barriers for the sake of practical collaboration, which tends to yield civic solidarity (a collaborative competency).

Moreover, it is important to recognize that these competencies are not linear and, in fact, feed from and help form each other. Indeed, one often only begins to discover self through the engagement of the other. In our experience, the other is not necessarily met initially out of altruistic desire, but often out of the practical self-interest of a common challenge. It is the human condition that the heart follows the hands of hard work, before the head finally agrees. Stereotypes are sometimes only overcome through the humanizing of work together.

Personal Competency

To have "personal competency" is to understand one's *own* moral, epistemological, and spiritual framework—to include one's own (holy) texts (and/or oral traditions) and what they say about engaging the other. It also includes understanding how and why one's own

character develops, and deepens. As noted above, traditional religious literacy literature often under-emphasizes the self as a starting point, if it is included at all. As Lenn Goodman (2014, 1, 3) astutely observes, self-knowledge is essential to authentic engagement and dialogue.

> [Fruitful dialogue demands] knowing something about who we are ourselves, what we believe and care about, and how what is other *actually is other*. Without the discipline of self-knowledge to complement our curiosity, interest collapses into mere projection and conjecture … The self-knowledge that pluralism demands is hard won. It means coming to peace with oneself, reconciling one's heritage with one's personal outlook and existential insights, and integrating oneself in a community even as one differentiates oneself from it … Tolerance is the minimum demand of pluralism in any healthy society. Religious tolerance does not mean homogenizing. Pluralism preserves differences. What it asks for is respect.

Comparative Competency

To have "comparative competency" is to understand the moral, epistemological, and spiritual framework of one's neighbor *as s/he does*, and what that framework says about engaging the other. This dimension of religious literacy includes the range of topics that would typically be covered in a religious studies course in comparative religion. However, we would also stress the crucial importance of developing an understanding of the *lived religion* of the religious other, in a particular place. Put another way, what are the thresholds in the moral framework of the other that allow one to *belong* to a particular group and/or place? In asking this question, we are especially mindful that the things that are genuinely meaningful in one's walk of faith do not necessarily comport precisely with that's religion's official doctrines.

Collaborative Competency

By "collaborative competency" we mean knowledge of the particular place where two (or more) different moral frameworks, usually informed by different religions, meet as two individuals and/or institutions that also have to accomplish a specific task. Collaborative competency is understanding the spiritual, ethnic, and/or organizational cultures relevant to developing and implementing a project or program together. A collaborative competency takes place when different individuals/institutions move from side-by-side tolerance (diversity), to self- and other-awareness, to mutual engagement (the heart of a healthy kind of pluralism). Crossing into the context of the other always respects the lived reality of a particular place, situating the partnership and resulting projects within the spiritual, secular, ethnic, and organizational cultures of the partners involved, while also recognizing the power dynamics that are present.

The prepared movement toward another is the moment of application. And that moment of crossing toward the other is not only engagement, but also leadership, as both parties will have to fashion shared goals that can accomplish the task at hand, and speak to the various government and civil society stakeholders (some, even many, of whom will not be religious).

*****

However, in addition to the above competencies, engagement and leadership also require specific *skills*—skills informed by historical experience and precedents of multi-faith endeavors. If there is a will to learn how to think conceptually about this process, then there must also be skills that train about what to do in specific contexts. These skills not only help build personal, comparative, and collaborative competencies, they are transferrable to any vocation, or location. They are critical to

the process of assessing and analyzing within the three competencies to include their combined application. Based on our global engagement experience, there are three basic skill sets that are particularly helpful in any situation: evaluation, negotiation, and communication.

Evaluation

The evaluation process takes specific account of self, as well as the other, according to the context in which the relevant parties are seeking to implement their shared goals. Evaluation understands that the role of religion takes place simultaneously—internally, and externally—along the same continuum: as one analytic factor among many, to a force that can have tremendous impact for good or ill. Internally, evaluation considers one's own character and beliefs, especially one's concept of the other, as well as unknown biases. Externally, evaluation seeks to accurately name and understand the role of religion in a given, multi-layered context, pursuant prosocial effect.

Negotiation

As one evaluates self, other, and the context of application, one prepares to engage cross-culturally, i.e. to build and lead the necessary partnerships. At every step of this process, negotiation takes place, internally, and externally. Internally, one cannot help but (re)consider one's own identity through the encounter of different beliefs, cultures, and peoples. Meanwhile, externally, there is a job to do. How well that gets done, at some point, is a reflection of the internal process, as well as one's capacity to engage respectfully. Negotiation involves mutual listening and understanding, which, in turn, lead to sustainable action. Communication is the key.

Communication

There are two kinds of communication, verbal and non-verbal. These communications take place across social-cultural-religious and

geo-political identities. Communication becomes that much more important in places where things like shame, respect, and family often have a serious and long-standing role. Imperatively, communication begins with listening: within one's own organization, within one's own country, and within the local social-cultural-religious context (from the capital to the province). An elicitive and empathetic ear is crucial to talk that results in trust, trust that leads to tangible results, together.

Conclusion: Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy as a Means to Covenantal Pluralism

Cross-cultural religious literacy is developed through a process of mutual engagement with a religious actor, state or non-state, rooted in an understanding of self, the other's self-understanding, and the objectives at hand in a specific cultural context. *But cross-cultural religious literacy is not an end unto itself.* Rather it is part of a broader theory of positive change.[6] In contrast to a religious "literacy" that is only a general knowledge of "facts" about the religions of others, cross-cultural religious literacy is a set of competencies and skills oriented to a normative vision for robust pluralism. A merely technical knowledge of religion will not somehow automatically support greater social flourishing and pluralistic peace. Indeed it is quite possible to combine factual knowledge of religion with illiberal, anti-pluralist sentiment. Familiarity can, unfortunately, breed contempt rather than solidarity. Ours is an era of "democratic recession" (Lovelace 2020) fueled in large part by a religious nationalism that defines the ethno-religious majority against ethno-religious minorities (usually as scapegoats).

As such it is important to place the task of improving religious literacy within a broader normative vision for a form of pluralism that is up to the challenge of our times. We need to be able to answer a basic teleological question: what is cross-cultural religious literacy *for*?

The answer we propose is this: *covenantal pluralism*. Cross-cultural

religious literacy is a vital means of making progress toward the ideal end-state of covenantal pluralism. "Covenantal pluralism" is an original phrase, first developed by Chris in his work with the Templeton Religion Trust in 2017. However, the ideas are not entirely new. In fact there are many historical precedents. (One 17th-century example is Roger Williams, who founded Rhode Island on a "covenant of peaceable neighborhood" that cherished freedom of conscience; see C. Seiple 2012.)

The phrase "covenantal pluralism" is designed to catalyze and convene new and needed conversations about the world we live in. Covenantal pluralism embodies the humility, patience, empathy, and responsibility to engage, respect, and protect the other—albeit without necessarily lending moral equivalency to the beliefs and behaviors of others (Stewart, Seiple, and Hoover 2020a, 2020b; Joustra 2020, 2021). A pluralism that is "covenantal" is richer and more resilient because it is relational—that is, it is not merely a transactional contract (although relationships often do begin with, and strategies are rooted in, contracts). Covenants, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (2002, 150-151) tells us, are

> a bond, not of interest or advantage, but of belonging … [A covenant is] where we develop the grammar and syntax of reciprocity, where we help others and they help us without calculations of relative advantage—where trust is born … Covenants are beginnings, acts of moral engagement. They are couched in broad terms whose precise meaning is the subject of ongoing debate but which stand as touchstones, ideas, reference points against which policies and practices are judged. What we need now is not a contract bringing into being a global political structure, but rather a covenant framing our shared vision for the future of humanity.

Accordingly the concept of covenantal pluralism assumes a holistic top-down and bottom-up approach: it seeks a constitutional framework of equal rights and responsibilities for all citizens under the rule of law

(the top-down), as well as a supportive cultural context (the bottom-up), of which religion is often a significant factor.

Cross-cultural religious literacy, then, is not merely a kind of technical expertise, nor merely an attribute of a good general education. Rather it is a set of competencies and skills situated within, and oriented to, a normative vision for robust pluralism. Defined in this way, religious literacy is relevant to much more than just polite "interfaith dialogues" among clergy and theologians. The practice of cross-cultural religious literacy, guided by covenantal pluralism, increases the likelihood that people of profoundly different points of moral and religious departure will nevertheless engage across differences and contribute in practical ways to the common good.

References

AAR Religion in the Schools Task Force. 2010. "Guideline for Teaching About Religion in K-12 Public Schools in the United States." Atlanta: American Academy of Religion. https://www.aarweb.org/common/Uploaded%20files/Publications%20and%20News/Guides%20and%20Best%20Practices/AARK-12CurriculumGuidelinesPDF.pdf

American Academy of Religion. 2019. "Religious Literacy Guidelines: What U.S. College Graduates Need to Know About Religion." Atlanta: American Academy of Religion. https://www.aarweb.org/AARMBR/Publications-and-News-/Guides-and-Best-Practices-/Teaching-and-Learning-/AAR-Religious-Literacy-Guidelines.aspx?WebsiteKey=61d76dfc-e7fe-4820-a0ca-1f792d24c06e

Connolly, William E. 2005. *Pluralism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Daugherty, Jared, ed. 2011 *Muslims and a Harmonious Society*. Arlington, VA: Institute for Global Engagement.

Dinham, Adam and Matthew Francis, eds. 2015. *Religious Literacy in Policy and Practice*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Eck, Diana. n.d. "What is Pluralism?" Pluralism Project website, Harvard University, https://pluralism.org/about. Accessed April 20, 2020.

Falk, Pamela. 2019. "Record 71 million people displaced as 'major powers' fail to

halt crises, UN Refugee Agency says." CBSnews.com, June 2019. https://www.cbsnews.com/news/un-refugee-agency-71-million-displaced-war-violence-major-powers-failure-syria-venezuela/

Gingerich, Tara R., Diane L. Moore, Robert Brodrick, and Carleigh Beriont. 2017. "Local Humanitarian Leadership: Engaging with Religion, Faith & Faith Actors." Oxfam and Harvard Divinity School Religious Literacy Project. https://oi-files-d8-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/file_attachments/rr-local-humanitarian-leadership-religious-literacy-310317-en.pdf

Goodman, Lenn. 2014. *Religious Pluralism and Values in the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Haynes, Charles and Oliver Thomas, eds. 2007. *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Schools*. Washington, DC: First Amendment Center.

Hoover, Dennis R., ed. 2014. *Religion and American Exceptionalism*. Oxford: Routledge.

Hoover, Dennis R. and Douglas Johnston, eds. 2012. *Religion and Foreign Affairs: Essential Readings*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.

Jacobsen, Douglas and Rhonda Hustedt Jacobsen. 2012. *No Longer Invisible: Religion in University Education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Joustra, Robert J. 2021. "Have We Reached Peak Pluralism?" *Religion & Global Society*, London School of Economics, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionglobalsociety/

Joustra, Robert J. 2020. "The Coordinates of Covenantal Pluralism: Mapping Pluralist Theory in the 21st Century." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 18(4): 18-34.

Lovelace, Ryan. 2020. "'Global recession in democracy': U.S. 'freedom' score falls 8 points." *The Washington Times*, March 4. https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/mar/4/freedom-house-freedom-world-2020-report-shows-decl/

Marcus, Benjamin. 2018. "Religious Literacy in American Education." In Michael D. Waggoner and Nathan Walker, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and American Education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199386819.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199386819-e-38

Moore, Diane L. 2007. *Overcoming Religious Illiteracy: A Cultural Studies Approach to the Study of Religion in Secondary Education*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Moore, Diane L. 2015. "Religious Literacy Project: Our Method." Cambridge, MA: Harvard Divinity School Religious Literacy Project. https://rlp.hds.harvard.edu/files/hds-rlp/files/rlp_method_2015.pdf

National Council for Social Studies. 2017. "C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards." Silver Spring, MD: National Council for Social Studies. https://www.socialstudies.org/sites/default/files/2017/Jun/c3-framework-for-social-studies-rev0617.pdf

National Council for Social Studies. n.d. "Academic Study of Religion Added to Social Studies Guidelines." Silver Spring, MD: National Council for Social Studies. https://www.socialstudies.org/about/academic-study-religion-added-social-studies-guidelines

Pew Research Center. 2020. "In 2018, Government Restrictions on Religion Reach Highest Level Globally in More Than a Decade." Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, November 10. https://www.pewforum.org/2020/11/10/in-2018-government-restrictions-on-religion-reach-highest-level-globally-in-more-than-a-decade/

Prothero, Stephen. 2007. *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—And Doesn't*. San Francisco: HarperOne.

Scott, James C. 2009. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press).

Sacks, Jonathan. 2002. *The Dignity of Difference*. London: Continuum.

Seiple, Chris. 2012. "The Essence of Exceptionalism: Roger Williams and the Birth of Religious Freedom in America." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 10(2): 13-19.

Seiple, Chris. 2016. "The Humanitarian System is not Working—So How Can We Fix It?" World Economic Forum blog, May 19. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/05/the-humanitarian-system-is-not-working-so-how-can-we-fix-it/

Seiple, Chris. 2018a. "Faith Can Overcome Religious Nationalism: Here's How." World Economic Forum blog, April 18. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/04/faith-can-overcome-religious-nationalism-heres-how/.

Seiple, Chris. 2018b. "The Call of Covenantal Pluralism." Templeton Lecture on Religion and World Affairs. Foreign Policy Research Institute, November 13. https://www.fpri.org/article/2018/11/the-call-of-covenantal-pluralism-defeating-religious-nationalism-with-faithful-patriotism/.

Seiple, Chris, Dennis R. Hoover, and Pauletta Otis, eds. 2013. *The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Security*. Oxford: Routledge.

Seiple, Robert. 2004. *Ambassadors of Hope*. Downers Grove, IN: Intervarsity Press.

Seiple, Robert and Dennis R. Hoover, eds. 2004. *Religion and Security: The New Nexus in International Relations*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Stewart, W. Christopher, Chris Seiple, and Dennis R. Hoover. 2020a. "Toward a Global Covenant of Peaceable Neighborhood: Introducing the Philosophy of Covenantal Pluralism." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 18(4): 1-17.

Stewart, W. Christopher, Chris Seiple, and Dennis R. Hoover. 2020b. "To Advance International Human Rights, First Promote Covenantal Pluralism." *Religion & Global Society*, London School of Economics, December 16, https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionglobalsociety/2020/12/to-advance-international-human-rights-first-promote-covenantal-pluralism/

Thames, Knox, Chris Seiple, and Amy Rowe. 2009. *International Religious Freedom Advocacy: A Guide to Organizations, Law, and NGOs*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.

Theodorou, Angelina. 2014. "Key Findings About Growing Religious Hostilities Around the World." Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, January 17. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/01/17/key-findings-about-growing-religious-hostilities-around-the-world/

UNHCR. 2020. "Forced displacement passes 80 million by mid-2020 as COVID-19 tests refugee protection globally." UNHCR, December 9. https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2020/12/5fcf94a04/forced-displacement-passes-80-million-mid-2020-covid-19-tests-refugee-protection.html

White, Joshua. 2008. *Pakistan's Islamist Frontier*. Washington, DC: Institute for Global Engagement.

About the Authors

Chris Seiple (Ph.D., The Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy) is President Emeritus of the Institute for Global Engagement and Principal Advisor to the Templeton Religion Trust's Covenantal Pluralism Initiative. A former U.S. Marine infantry officer, he is Senior Fellow for Comparative Religion at the University of Washington's Jackson School of International Studies. He has previously served as Co-Chair of the U.S. Secretary of State's "Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group" (2011-2013), and as Senior Advisor to the U.S. Agency for International Development's Evidence-Based Summit on Strategic Religious Engagement (2020). He is co-editor with Dennis R. Hoover of the forthcoming *Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism, and Global Engagement*.

Dennis R. Hoover (D.Phil. Politics, University of Oxford) is Editor of *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, Research Advisor to the Templeton Religion Trust's Covenantal Pluralism Initiative, and Senior Fellow at the Institute for Global Engagement. He is editor of *Religion and American Exceptionalism* (Routledge 2014), co-editor with Chris Seiple and Pauletta Otis of *The Routledge Handbook of Religion and Security* (Routledge 2013), and co-editor with Douglas Johnston of *Religion and Foreign Affairs* (Baylor University Press 2012).

Acknowledgements

This paper was commissioned as part of a project supported by the Issachar Fund, the Templeton Religion Trust, and the Institute for Global Engagement.

(Endnotes)

1 The Northwest Frontier Province was renamed as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in 2010.

2 For example, publications by IGE staff over its first 20 years include R. Seiple 2004; R. Seiple and Hoover 2004; White 2008; Thames, C. Seiple, and Rowe

2009; Daugherty 2011; Hoover and Johnston 2012; C. Seiple, Hoover, and Otis 2013; Hoover 2014; and many other policy briefings. For more, please see: https://globalengage.org/publications.

3 This article is a slightly edited and abridged version of the introductory chapter in a book we are co-editing. Forthcoming later this year, the book is entitled *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism, and Global Engagement*.

4 See https://jsis.washington.edu/religion/cross-cultural-religious-literacy-graduate-certificate/.

5 See https://hds.harvard.edu/news/2020/10/15/understanding-religion-and-public-life#:~:text=Harvard%20Divinity%20School%20launched%20this%20week%20Religion%20and,since%20it%20introduced%20the%20master%20of%20theological%20studies.

6 This broader theory of change identifies several key categories of enabling conditions (or "conditions of possibility") for making progress toward robust, relational, nonrelativistic pluralism. Along with cross-cultural religious literacy, these conditions include freedom of religion and belief, as well the embodiment and expression of essential virtues such as humility and patience. For more, see Stewart, Seiple, and Hoover 2020a.

TOWARD A GLOBAL COVENANT OF PEACEABLE NEIGHBORHOOD:

INTRODUCING THE PHILOSOPHY OF COVENANTAL PLURALISM

By W. Christopher Stewart, Chris Seiple, and Dennis R. Hoover

Abstract: The global challenge of living together peacefully and constructively in the context of deep religious/worldview differences will not be met through bumper-sticker slogans about "tolerance." The essay provides an introductory overview of a richer approach called covenantal pluralism, which has been developed over the last few years at the Templeton Religion Trust. The philosophy of covenantal pluralism is a robust, relational, and non-relativistic paradigm of citizenship that emphasizes both legal equality and neighborly solidarity. It calls not only for a constitutional order characterized by equal rights and responsibilities but also a culture of engagement characterized by relationships of mutual respect and protection.

Translation and citation info: This is an Indonesian translation of a research paper commissioned as part of a project supported by the Templeton Religion Trust, the Issachar Fund, and the Institute for Global Engagement. This translated paper is for noncommercial educational use

only. The English language version of record is published in *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Winter 2020): 1-17, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15570274.2020.1835029 .

> Having made covenant of peaceable neighborhood with the sachems and natives round about us, and having, in a sense of God's merciful providence unto me in my distress, called the place PROVIDENCE, I desired it might be for a shelter for persons distressed for conscience.
>
> —Roger Williams, 1636[1]

Our world is increasingly beset by problems of violent extremism, religious and ethnic nationalism, cultural polarization, scapegoating of minorities, and other divisive trends. According to the Pew Research Center (2018), 83% of the world's population now lives under conditions where there are high levels of **government restrictions** on religion and/or high social hostilities involving religion. Pew also reports that 11% of governments around the world use "nationalist rhetoric against members of a particular religious group." Given these figures it's perhaps not surprising that the world is now experiencing the highest number of refugees since World War II. Right-wing cultural populism, left-wing secularist extremism, anti-immigrant hostility, and religious and ideological tribalism are on the rise in numerous nations around the globe. Freedom House warns that liberal democracy itself is receding. According to their annual tracking, 2019 marked the 14th consecutive year of declines in global freedom (Repucci 2020).

The persistent and inevitable fact of deep diversity lies at the heart of these challenges. "Tolerance" of such diversity is noble and necessary—as far as it goes. But it is increasingly evident that tolerance

alone is not sufficient as a pathway to solutions for the complex struggles we face. Problems of this nature and magnitude will not be overcome simply through earnest calls for everyone to "co-exist" and "celebrate diversity." We will need more than pluralism-lite. That is, in a world of deep difference we need a normative philosophy of pluralism that does more than paper over the challenges of diversity with bumper-sticker slogans of tolerance.[2]

In this essay we provide an introductory overview of a richer concept of pluralism called *covenantal pluralism* (Stewart 2018; Seiple 2018a; Seiple 2018b), which has been developed over the last few years at the Templeton Religion Trust.[3] The philosophy of covenantal pluralism reaches beyond banal appeals for peaceful coexistence and instead points to a robust, relational, and non-relativistic paradigm for living together, peacefully and productively, in the context of our deepest differences. Covenantal pluralism offers a holistic vision of citizenship that emphasizes both legal equality and neighborly solidarity. It calls for *both* a constitutional order characterized by equal rights and responsibilities *and* a culture of engagement characterized by relationships of mutual respect and protection.

This vision of pluralism is, to be sure, ambitious. The covenantal-pluralist paradigm describes an ideal end-state featuring mutually-reinforcing legal structures and social norms. Yet, we maintain that covenantal pluralism is not just a theoretical abstraction or utopian speculation. It is not merely a figment of a political philosopher's imagination, ahistorical and unconnected with real-world conditions and religious teachings. Rather, the covenantal pluralist paradigm we propose is a realistic socio-political aspiration, one with relevance, appeal, and precedents across the world's many religious/worldview traditions.

As such, in what follows we begin not with a formal theory of covenantal pluralism (as important as that is), but rather with a brief historical illustration of covenantal pluralist values in practice. We do so via the case of Roger Williams (c.1603–1683), perhaps the most important

nonconformist ever to be kicked out of Puritan Massachusetts. Williams would go on to found Rhode Island on principles of robust pluralism, freedom of conscience, and cross-cultural respect. He championed these principles not in spite of his own Christian faith but because of it—and he applied them not just with other Christians, nor just with those from Abrahamic faith traditions, but also with those from Native American religious traditions. While the 17th-century Rhode Island experience was of course not a perfect representation of such principles, it is nevertheless an important and instructive example, even if in embryonic form, of a civic order self-consciously seeking to be a place where people of radically divergent religious/worldview perspectives could live together constructively and cooperatively—as both a function of their respective faith traditions (the right thing to do), and their common need for stability (the self-interested thing to do).

Following this introductory illustration, we outline in more detail the concept of covenantal pluralism that informs the Templeton Religion Trust's Covenantal Pluralism Initiative. First, we discuss the pitfalls of approaching "pluralism" as if it is synonymous with mere relativistic tolerance, breezy ecumenism, or an eclectic syncretism. Second, we provide a brief overview of how the resurgent salience of religion in global public life since the end of the Cold War has catalyzed a proliferation of theories of pluralism. Third, we elaborate on what precisely is (and is not) meant by the modifier "covenantal," and what key conditions enable covenantal pluralism. Finally we conclude with some reflections on the global applicability and adaptability of the covenantal-pluralist vision.

A Most Flourishing Civil State: The Example of Roger Williams and a "Covenant of Peaceable Neighborhood"

In American mythology Puritans crossed the Atlantic for "religious freedom," but in fact they did not actually want to live within a regime of religious liberty for all (an environment that Holland had

to a significant extent already offered them). Indeed John Winthrop was quite clear in what he sought: "a place of Cohabitation and Consortship under a due form of Government both civil and ecclesiastical" (Gaustad 1999, 23). As one Massachusetts minister put it, the colony would "endeavor after Theocracy as near as might be to what was the glory of Israel" (quoted in Barry 2012, 169). As theocracies go, Massachusetts may have been relatively soft. But it would not have looked that way to the Baptists who were outlawed, the Quakers who were hung, and the "witches" who were executed on the Puritans' watch.

Williams dissented from the ruling political theology in numerous ways. He believed, among other things, that the churches in Massachusetts should be separate from the Church of England, that church and public officials should not swear an oath to God, that the King of England had no right to give away the land of the Native Americans, and that tax money should not be given to ministers. Above all Williams believed in freedom of conscience—and that the well-being of both religion and the state ultimately depended on it.[4]

By 1636 the Boston magistrates had had enough of the nonconformist Williams and decided to banish him to England. Williams fled, eventually settling among his Native American friends at the headwaters of Narragansett Bay, where he paid them for the land on which he lived. He called the place Providence because he "made covenant of peaceable neighborhood with the sachems [leaders] and natives round about us" and had "a sense of God's merciful providence unto me in my distress."[5] Williams hoped the new colony might provide "shelter for persons distressed for conscience" (quoted in Barry 2012, 220).

His model was not only remarkably inclusive for his 17th-century context, but also expansive, as he envisioned it extending beyond his own colony. He wrote, "It is the will and command of *God*, that

(since the comming of his Sonne the *Lord Jesus*) a *permission* of the most *Paganish*, *Jewish*, *Turkish*, or *Antichristian consciences* and *worships*, bee granted to *all* men in all *Nations* and *Countries*" (quoted in Rowley 2017, 69). At the same time, however, he was no anarchist. He understood the need for stability and security of the state, and envisioned that, under the right conditions, liberty and security would work together hand in hand. Williams summed it up this way in a January 1655 letter to the city of Providence:

> It has fallen sometimes that both Papists and Protestants, Jews and Turks may be embarked on one ship. Upon which supposal I do affirm, that all the liberty of conscience that ever I pleaded for turns upon these two hinges, that none of the Papists, Protestants, Jews, or Turks be forced to come to the ship's prayers or worship, nor secondly, [be] compelled from their own particular prayers or worship, if they practice any. I further add, that I never denied that notwithstanding this liberty, the commander of the ship ought to command the ship's course, yea, and also to command that justice, peace, and sobriety be kept and practiced, both among the seamen and the passengers. (quoted in Davis 2008, 278)

In other words, those with political authority had no right to tell citizens how to believe (which Williams denounced as "soul rape"), even as there was a requirement of citizens to exercise their right to believe, and live out that belief, responsibly. He held that forced worship "stinks in the nostrils of God" (22 June 1670 letter to Major John Mason, as quoted by Barry 2012, 336) and leads inevitably to civil unrest, whereas liberty of conscience leads to true citizen solidarity and loyalty. Accordingly, the Rhode Island Charter of 1663 confidently declared that the colony would "hold forth a livlie experiment, that a most flourishing civill state may stand and best be maintained … with a full libertie in religious concernments" (see Seiple and Hoover 2004, vii).[6]

Crucially, Williams was not a political pluralist because he held his religious beliefs less confidently than the Puritan theocrats held theirs. His religious convictions and political intuitions were deeply rooted in his understanding of the Bible. Williams scholar John Barry (2012, 225) notes that "hardly a single paragraph in any letter [by Williams] fails to mention God. Faith, longing for God, and knowledge of Scripture are ingrained in his writing. … His life revolved around seeking God; that search informed the way he thought, the way he wrote, what he did each day." Historian Matthew Rowley (2017, 68) notes similarly that across six volumes of collected works and two volumes of correspondence, Williams "rarely goes a paragraph without citing from, alluding to, or making an inference from scripture or theology."

In fact, Williams shared many of the Puritans' theological doctrines (Davis 2008) but came to starkly different conclusions about religious pluralism and political order. As Miroslav Volf (2015, 151–152) concludes, both Williams and John Winthrop "were religious exclusivists. Yet Winthrop's religious exclusivism led to political exclusivism, and Williams's to political pluralism." Three examples illustrate how Williams was simultaneously a religious exclusivist theologically but a pluralist socio-politically.

The first example is Williams' attitudes toward and relationship with Native Americans. On the one hand, Williams believed firmly in the truth of the Christian gospel and in a mandate and duty to evangelize—to actively seek converts. But on the other hand, he did not translate his views on the Great Commission into a posture of generalized disrespect of Native Americans. Williams insisted that "Nature knows no difference between Europeans and Americans in blood, birth, bodies, &c., God having of one blood made all mankind" (Gaustad 1999, 28). He also refused to share his faith with the Native Americans until he learned their language. Barry (2012, 157) explains that Williams "believed that one could not become a

Christian without a full understanding of what Christianity meant, and he refrained from any efforts to convert Indians until his fluency in their language was adequate to explain Christ's message."

The second example is Williams' attitudes and policies toward Quakers. Theologically, Williams stood with other Puritans regarding Quakers—that is, he despised them (Barry 2012). He argued that Quakers "preached not Christ Jesus but Themselves," and that their teachings were an abomination (Gaustad 1999, 183). Yet Williams never let these serious theological differences translate into political persecution of Quakers. Unlike in Massachusetts, Quakers were welcomed in Rhode Island. He also debated Quakers respectfully. For instance, his written summary of the Quakers' theological position was not contested by the Quakers (Barry 2012).

A third example is an episode demonstrating how Williams' commitment to freedom of conscience was in some cases strong enough to trump even pervasively patriarchal norms. Two years after the 1636 founding of Rhode Island, Joshua and Jane Verin, next door neighbors to Roger and Mary Williams, stopped attending church, held in the Williams' home. Jane wanted to attend but Joshua forbade it. It became a communal concern, however, according to the covenant to which all had agreed. In the end the community kept its covenant to itself and its members; Jane Verin continued to attend church—without her husband, or his approval (Eberle 2004).

A great deal more could be said about Williams, of course, but the above sketch should suffice to make clear that Williams' ideas about freedom of conscience and "peaceable neighborhood" were a kind of foreshadow of the philosophy we are today referring to as covenantal pluralism. We would even go so far as to say that Williams' vision was "exceptional." However, by "exceptional" we do not mean to suggest any of the triumphalist meanings that are oftentimes part and parcel of the rhetoric of "American exceptionalism" (Hoover 2014). In our view, Williams' 17th-century version of covenantal

pluralism was exceptional not because it captured something uniquely "American," but because it was an exceptionally *early* articulation of a paradigm that remains globally relevant and practically achievable today in diverse cultural contexts.

Williams blazed a path that—unfortunately, to judge by the current state of American political culture and institutions—the United States has struggled to follow in its pursuit of a "more perfect union." Consider, for example, the Pew Research Center's two global indices of restrictions on religion, one of which measures government restrictions on religion and the other social hostilities involving religion (Pew 2018). The United States does not rank in the "low" tier on either of these indices. Rather, the United States—along with several other Western liberal democracies—ranks in the middle of the pack. There are numerous non-Western countries, from every Global South region, with similar or *lower* levels of religious restrictions and hostilities as the United States. The upshot is this: All countries, regardless of geography or GDP, face ongoing choices about the path they will take in dealing with the challenges and opportunities presented by religious/worldview diversity.

Further, a covenantal-pluralist path is not necessarily a "new" or uncharted one. Indeed there may be ample signposts already embedded in diverse cultures and historical experiences worldwide. For instance, a famous example from India's history is the Mughal emperor Akbar (1542-1605), who is renowned for the benevolent approach he took to religious diversity. As A.L. Basham (1954, 482) argued,

> [Akbar] fully realized that the Empire could only stand on the basis of complete toleration. All religious tests and disabilities were abolished, including the hated poll-tax on unbelievers. Rajput princes and other Hindus were given high offices of state, without conversion to Islam …. If the policy of the greatest of India's Muslim rulers had been continued by his successors, her history might have been very different.

Pluralist precedents can of course be found in more recent Indian history as well—including in India's 1949 constitution[7]—but unfortunately they are often overshadowed by India's contemporary challenges of religious violence and religious nationalism.

Put simply, answering the call to covenantal pluralism may in some contexts be more a matter of *re*discovery than discovery, of restoration rather than revolution. Regardless, however, the path of covenantal pluralism is indeed a demanding one to tread. For starters, covenantal pluralism requires a thick skin—that is, a comfort level with disagreement and difference that goes beyond mere "tolerance."

Why Tolerance is Not Enough

In our fast-globalizing world of ever-growing diversity, "tolerance" is certainly necessary as a general norm of civility. And there are important international human rights documents dedicated to defending tolerance, such as the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. Still, tolerance, in and of itself, is not sufficient for the challenge of living well with deep diversity. Indeed, minimalist and uncritical versions of "tolerance" can actually run counter to genuinely authentic and sustainable pluralism. The problems are threefold.

First, to frame the imperative in terms of granting "tolerance" can suggest a posture of privilege, even condescension. No one wants merely to be "tolerated," as if their presence is only grudgingly and tenuously accepted within the socio-political order. We "tolerate" things we are hoping to get rid of as soon as the opportunity arises, such as back pain or toothaches. Instead, all people want to feel that their equal standing and inherent human dignity are universally respected. This kind of empathetic egalitarianism is, moreover, vital to social flourishing, especially in a democracy. George Washington acknowledged as much in his famous August 18, 1790 letter to

the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island: "All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunities of citizenship. It is now no more that toleration is spoken of, as if it was by the indulgence of one class of people, that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights."[8]

A second difficulty in platitudinous appeals for "tolerance" is that they can reveal an alarming degree of religious illiteracy. An undifferentiated ideology of tolerance can at times be indicative of oversimplified, if not outright naïve, assumptions regarding the very nature of religion and religious differences. Any serious study of religious traditions and comprehensive worldviews immediately brings into sharp relief the realities of deep diversity. All religions are not the same; some disagreements are irreconcilable.

A prominent scholar who has long made the case for facing multi-faith realities with eyes wide open is Stephen Prothero, author of *God is Not One* (Prothero 2010a). In an interview with *Religion Dispatches* about the book, Prothero (2010b) concisely summarized the problem of religiously illiterate tolerance:

> [In graduate school] I repeatedly heard from professors that all religions were different paths up the same mountain. That sentiment never made any sense to me. I had Jewish and Muslim and Christian and atheist friends, and none of us was under the illusion that we agreed with each other. … The main argument [of *God is not One*] is that the world's religions are climbing different mountains with very different tools and techniques. One perspective that new atheists and liberal multiculturalists share is that all religions are essentially the same (false and poisonous on the one hand, and true and beautiful on the other). I think this view is dangerous, disrespectful, and untrue. Christians do not go on the hajj to Mecca, and Muslims do not affirm the doctrine of the Trinity. Moreover, going on the hajj is not peripheral to Muslims—in

> fact it is one of Islam's Five Pillars. And the belief that Jesus is the Son of God is not inessential to Christians—in fact it stands at the heart of the Christian gospel. … The bottom line? Tolerance is an empty virtue if you don't even understand what you are tolerating.

The third and arguably most significant problem with mere tolerance is that it is too easily coupled with *indifference*. Sir John Templeton, founder of the Templeton Religion Trust, was acutely aware that much of what passes for "tolerance" can be rather flimsy. He believed strongly that human progress in all areas, including religion, depends in large part on *constructive competition*—that is, respectfully *engaging* differences, not dismissively ignoring them. Sir John wrote that

> Tolerance may be a divine virtue, but it could also become a vehicle for apathy. Millions of people are thoroughly tolerant toward diverse religions, but rarely do such people go down in history as creators, benefactors, or leaders of progress. … Should we not desire to have our neighbour share insights and try to convey to us the brilliant light that has transformed his life—the fire in his soul? Why settle for a least-common-denominator type of religion based on tolerance alone? More than tolerance, we need constructive competition. When persons on fire for a great gospel compete lovingly to give their finest treasures to each other, will not everyone benefit? (Templeton 2000, 122-123)

In their 2016 book *Living with Difference: How to Build Community in a Divided World*, Adam Seligman, Rachel Wasserfall, and David Montgomery argue that contemporary pieties of tolerance often treat religious differences as though they are matters of mere aesthetic preference—and consequently *not* matters requiring principled engagement.

> We continually deny difference rather than engaging with it, so much so that nonengagement is the very stuff of our social life. In a certain sense, denying difference by relegating it to the aesthetic or trivial is itself a form of indifference toward what is other and different. By framing our difference from the other's position, or action, in terms of tastes or triviality, we exempt ourselves from engaging with it and can maintain an attitude of indifference. … [Such approaches] are in fact less than tolerant, because they actually disengage from difference rather than attempt to come to terms with it. They are perhaps nothing more than a way to elide the whole problem of difference in modern society rather than realize it. (Seligman, Wasserfall, and Montgomery 2016, 8–9)

In short, a "tolerance" that amounts to little more than apathy and crude relativism is insufficient to meet the challenges of our times.

The "Return" of Religion and the Need for Pluralist Theory

An important background condition that helps explain the enduring popularity of cheap bumper-sticker "tolerance" is the lingering cultural power of secularization theory, along with its methodological implications, especially within the academy. Secularization theory's core premise was that modernity undermines religion culturally and epistemologically—that is, in modern conditions, religion is either abandoned entirely or is radically privatized and relegated to the psychological, cultural, and political margins. "Tolerance" toward religious faith and practice of any sort is a natural outgrowth of pervasive popular assumptions about the ineluctably receding significance of religion.

The irony is that most social scientists no longer subscribe to secularization theory. A prominent case in point is the late Peter Berger, an eminent sociologist whose early work helped elevate secularization theory to near-paradigmatic status. In the 1990s,

however, Berger famously renounced his adherence to secularization theory, and began arguing that a theory of pluralization should decisively displace secularization theory as the paradigm for understanding contemporary religion.

In *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age*, Berger (2014) argued that modernization does not necessarily result in the decline of religion, but it does mean that more people than ever before must live amidst cacophonously competing beliefs, values, and lifestyles. This need not and should not be conceived as strictly a "Western" phenomenon. Global South contexts are experiencing pluralization as well, especially in the wake of increasing urbanization and migration. The process of pluralization necessarily forces the modern person into more-frequent encounters with deep differences. For some this can be a source of anxiety and irritation.[9] It can be interpreted as undermining epistemic and moral certainty, forcing matters that might otherwise have remained in the background of consciousness instead to be dealt with in the foreground. Globalization and technological change accelerate these dynamics and can foster feelings of spiritual and psychological dislocation.

Berger also discussed two commonplace but highly problematic strategies for dealing with the modern predicament: fundamentalism and relativism. A fundamentalist, according to Berger, is someone who attempts to restore moral/epistemic certainty through various social and political means. At the opposite extreme, a relativist is one who makes an ideology out of moral equivalence, non-judgmentalism, and "tolerance." With the poles so defined—the former as dangerous and the latter as vacuous—Berger (2014, 15) argued for "the maintenance and legitimation of the middle ground between fundamentalism and relativism." Berger rightly (in our view) suggests that this happy middle ground will be a form of pluralism.

But any argument for "pluralism" must immediately confront a significant terminological problem. Namely, in the context of religion

today, the word "pluralism" is most often used in ways that are synonymous with relativism. In both scholarly and popular discourse, when "pluralism" is invoked without specific qualifiers, the default meaning usually attributed to the word is that of relativism. This is the "we're all climbing the same mountain" attitude of breezy equivalence that Stephen Prothero (2010) rightly dismisses as "pretend pluralism."

The question, then, is this: What is *real* pluralism? And how should we qualify it, if the word "pluralism" on its own is, at best, ambiguous?

The Many Faces of Pluralism

For a fleeting moment in the immediate post-Cold War period there was heady optimism about the "end of history"—the global triumph of liberalism and its constitutive attributes of individualism, rationalism, legalism, proceduralism, etc. But the gods refused to die, and particularistic identities roared back into prominence, sometimes violently. The future quickly became one not of universalization of liberal order but of cultural and political balkanization. Theorists from both the "left" and "right" have increasingly recognized the need to articulate a philosophy of pluralism that corresponds better to empirical facts on the ground, and that has better prospects for normative coherence and functional consensus across deep global diversity.

The result has been a highly creative and intellectually productive profusion of pluralist theories, particularly in the last ten years. The many faces of pluralist thought in the literature today include, for example:

- confident pluralism (Inazu 2016; Keller and Inazu 2020)
- courageous pluralism (Patel 2020; Patel 2018; Patel 2016; Geis 2020)
- pragmatic pluralism (L. Patton 2018; L. Patton 2006)
- deep/agonistic pluralism (Connolly 2005)
- principled/civic/structural pluralism (Carlson-Thies 2018; Chaplin 2016; Skillen 1994; Monsma 1992; Soper, den Dulk, and Monsma 2016)

- inclusive pluralism (Marsden 2015)
- "principled distance" (or "Indian model") pluralism (Bhargava 2012)
- "religious harmony"/regulated pluralism (Neo 2020)
- "political secularism" pluralism (Mackure and Taylor 2011; Taylor 2010)
- "difference" pluralism (Mahmood 2016; Shakman Hurd 2015)
- "living together differently" pluralism (Seligman, Wasserfall, and Montgomery 2016)
- "encounter of commitments" pluralism (Eck n.d.; Eck 2020)
- "global public square" pluralism (Guinness 2013)
- and more

The array of contemporary pluralisms is itself pluralistic in several respects. For example, some brands of pluralism have long and formidable philosophical pedigrees whereas others are of more recent vintage. Some are more preoccupied with the structural and positive law dimensions of robust pluralism—the constitutional and statutory "rules of the game" for fairness across all religious and secular worldviews—whereas others are more attuned to the cultural, relational, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of living with deep differences. Some focus more on applicability in Western liberal democracy (particularly the Unites States) whereas others take a more abstractly universal or non-Western approach. Some take a broad view of the degree of consensus—political and/or theological—that is possible and desirable under pluralistic conditions, whereas others envision a minimalist, "thinner" consensus. (For a comparison of many of the different streams of contemporary pluralist thought, see Joustra 2020.)

However, some key commonalities across most of these pluralisms are that they eschew simplistic relativism, approach the challenges of diversity with realism but not fatalism, and envision a positive pluralism that calls not for mere side-by-side, arms-length coexistence but for a

principled engagement across religious and worldview divides. Take for example the theory of "deep pluralism" developed by political theorist William E. Connolly. Connolly argues that a degree of conflict and competition is inherent to the human condition, but it is still possible for these inevitable tensions to have peaceful, productive, prosocial effects. According to Connolly, a realistic-yet-positive pluralism

> does not issue in a simple universalism in which one image of transcendence sets the standard everywhere or in a cultural relativism in which one faith prevails here and another there. It is neither universalism nor relativism in the simple mode of each. It is deep pluralism. A pluralism that periodically must be defended militantly against this or that drive to religio-state Unitarianism. The public ethos of pluralism pursued here, again, solicits the active cultivation of pluralist virtues by each faith and the negotiation of a positive ethos of engagement between them. (Connolly 2005, 64-65)

Diana Eck, director of the Harvard Pluralism Project, also underscores the importance of principled engagement across faith/worldview lines. In her call for a "new paradigm of pluralism," Eck (n.d.) argues that:

> Pluralism is not diversity alone, but the energetic engagement with diversity. Diversity can and has meant the creation of religious ghettoes with little traffic between or among them. Today, religious diversity is a given, but pluralism is not a given; it is an achievement. Mere diversity without real encounter and relationship will yield increasing tensions in our societies. … The new paradigm of pluralism does not require us to leave our identities and our commitments behind, for pluralism is the encounter of commitments. It means holding our deepest differences, even our religious differences, not in isolation, but in relationship to one another.

We concur with Eck, but would add that new diction can be helpful, indeed even necessary, in conveying new perspectives and nuances. Again, nowadays the word "pluralism" is very often *not* used to signify a non-relativistic encounter of commitments, but rather a simple relativism typically promoted alongside bumper-sticker clichés of multiculturalism (Sacks 2007). As such, we believe it is useful to attach a modifier to the word "pluralism" that signals clearly from the outset that what is intended is something distinctly richer and more engaged than casually relativistic tolerance. We suggest that the modifier that most compellingly invites this more nuanced take on pluralism is *covenantal*.

What Covenantal Pluralism Is … and Isn't

In our view the central virtue of the word "covenant" is that it evokes an easily understood, holistic vision that emphasizes not only *rules*, as important as those are, but also *relationships*. By contrast to a pluralism that is strictly "contractual" (or transactional), a covenantal pluralism is one that entails a deeper sense of moral solemnity and significance, and assumes an indefinite time horizon. A "contract" is a quintessentially conditional relationship governed by rational rules, violation of which nullifies the relationship. But a "covenant" endures beyond specific conflicts and beyond episodic departures from norms. It involves a more fluid relationship between rules and grace. Framing robust pluralism in this way is particularly resonant beyond the West, where many cultures are in practice far more communitarian than contractarian (Sacks 2002; Sacks 2007).

The concept of covenantal pluralism is simultaneously about "top-down" legal and policy parameters and "bottom-up" cultural norms and practices. A world of covenantal pluralism is characterized both by a constitutional order of equal rights and responsibilities and by a culture of reciprocal commitment to engaging, respecting, and protecting the other—albeit *without* necessarily conceding equal

veracity or moral equivalence to the beliefs and behaviors of others. The envisioned end-state is neither a thin-soup ecumenism nor vague syncretism, but rather a positive, practical, non-relativistic pluralism. It is a paradigm of civic fairness and human solidarity, a covenant of global neighborliness that is intended to bend but not break under the pressure of diversity.

We use the "covenant" concept here in its secular sense, one accessible to people of any religion or no religion. To be sure, various religious traditions—in particular those within the Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—use the word "covenant" in theologically particularist ways within their respective intra-faith contexts. But in the context of *pluralism*, the word "covenant" is used in a much different sense, one explicitly cognizant of the myriad forms of faith/worldview diversity around the world.[10] Our usage is analogous to the inclusive way "covenant" is invoked in some international human rights treaties, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; or, even, a homeowner's association of different families and beliefs who agree that everyone in their neighborhood should be governed by common rules.

Jonathan Sacks, author of the 2002 book *The Dignity of Difference* and former Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, has long thought about the meaning of the term "covenant," its spiritual origin, and its secular application on behalf of all faiths and none:

> Covenants are about the larger groupings in and through which we develop identity. They are about the "We" in which I discover the "I." Covenantal relationships are those sustained by trust. … Covenant is a bond, not of interest or advantage, but of belonging. … [A covenant is] where we develop the grammar and syntax of reciprocity, where we help others and they help us without calculations of relative advantage—where trust is born. (Sacks 2002, 150-151)

He explains further that:

> [A covenant] reminds us that we are guardians of the past for the sake of the future. It extends our horizons to the chain of generations of which we are a part. […] Covenants are beginnings, acts of moral engagement. They are couched in broad terms whose precise meaning is the subject of ongoing debate but which stand as touchstones, ideas, reference points against which policies and practices are judged. (Sacks 2002, 203)

In short, a pluralism that is covenantal is holistic (simultaneously "top-down" and "bottom-up") and long-term, characterized by mutual reliance and, as a result, resilience.

Furthermore, we argue that covenantal pluralism is more *genuinely plural*—that is, more inclusive of the actual extent of diversity that exists—and consequently more likely to be received and perceived as normatively *legitimate* at the local level. There is room at the table of covenantal pluralism for a genuinely robust diversity of actors to engage one another. The invitees are not just an unrepresentative sample that consists only of self-selected cosmopolitans. Instead there is a more realistic range—secular to religious, fundamentalist to modernist, Western to Eastern, and so on. This is a pluralism that requires a humble posture of openness to people who make exclusive truth claims, who are deeply embedded in communities with particularistic identities and guarded boundaries, whose beliefs and practices are not as "negotiable" as consumer-market choices (J. Patton 2018). Covenantal Pluralism is inclusive of the exclusive.

There are, to be sure, limits; some religious (and ideological) actors may be so thoroughly illiberal and anti-pluralist that there simply isn't a conversation to be had. Still, it is entirely possible, and indeed common, for some faith communities to retain internal beliefs and practices that are "orthodox," and yet be pluralists in civic and political life (Volf 2015; Volf 2011; Yang 2014). The key is whether such communities embrace the spirit of covenantal pluralism and

its parameters—which include, for example, respecting the right of individuals to opt-out of their community without fear of violence, and respecting the equal prerogatives of other communities with different internal practices (Hoover 2016).

A pluralism of this covenantal sort is neither easy nor natural for most people. It is not the path of least resistance. Once established, however, it holds realistic promise as a path for negotiating diversity in a way that advances both spiritual development and social flourishing. The philosophy of covenantal pluralism echoes a central tenet of the theory of social change espoused by Sir John Templeton, who firmly believed that "progress comes from constructive competition" (Templeton 1998, 122)—that is, competition conducted *in a certain spirit* (loving and friendly) and *under the right conditions* (free and fair). Sir John held that constructive competition and principled engagement across differences are necessary to avoid stagnation and catalyze progress in religion and society. The benefits include broader and deeper understanding of spiritual realities, expanded social dividends and social capital associated with religious faith and practice at its best, and greater overall vitality and dynamism of religious expression.

Constituting Covenantal Pluralism

We find it useful to conceptualize the key constitutive dimensions of covenantal pluralism in terms of "conditions of possibility"—that is, the enabling conditions that are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for a healthy and sustainable form of robust pluralism to exist.[11] These conditions can be grouped into several major categories.

The first is *freedom of religion and belief* (FoRB), which includes two dimensions: (a) free exercise of religion/freedom of conscience, and (b) equal treatment of religions/worldviews. Our definition of FoRB in the context of covenantal pluralism is shaped by Article 18 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

> Article 18. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, and observance.

In fact the history of the drafting and negotiation of this text by a highly diverse drafting committee could itself be seen as a case study of covenantal pluralism (Glendon 2001; Brink 2003.) The committee's deliberations revealed considerable effort to make the text acceptable across very diverse political systems and cultures. One of the most influential framers of the UDHR, China's P.C. Chang, defended these principles against the charge that they are somehow narrowly "Western" (Glendon 2001, 142).

A foundational premise of covenantal pluralism is that the impulse to spirituality and the yearning to seek answers about transcendence are universal. Any systemic repression or discrimination interfering with this expression therefore goes against the grain of human nature, and will very likely contribute to social and political instability (Seiple and Hoover 2012). A sustainable environment of covenantal pluralism requires robust protections for the freedom to explore the nature of ultimate reality, interrogate one's own beliefs about transcendent/spiritual realities, organize (or reorganize) one's life in accordance with one's discoveries, freely associate (or disassociate) with others in the collective pursuit of truth about transcendent and ultimate realities, and freely express one's core convictions in the public square—albeit in a way consistent with the requirements of public order and the equal rights of others.

However, FoRB alone does not exhaust the conditions of possibility needed for covenantal pluralism in its fullest sense. Codifying legal protections for religious freedom is vitally important yet not the same as achieving covenantal pluralism. Covenantal pluralism presupposes not only the "rules" that should govern a

regime of religious freedom but also the relational norms within which rules have (or fail to have) any actual purchase. In other words, in the absence of any "covenantal" relationships and/or commitments that transcend religious and worldview divides, it is unlikely that sound rules for religious freedom will be discerned in the first place. And even if some proposed rules are logically "correct," when large segments of the population do not share any covenantal solidarity or fellow feeling, they are apt to just dismiss such rules out of hand.

A second category of enabling conditions is *religious literacy*. As noted above, religious illiteracy is widespread and contributes to an enfeebled public understanding of pluralism. What we mean by religious literacy is more than just general knowledge sufficient to pass a quiz on "world religions." Instead we mean a religious literacy that includes awareness of real-world cross-cultural contexts, along with skills to engage such contexts. An apt analogy here is the contrast between proficiency in abstract maths vs. mathematical literacy, the latter of which requires real-world problem-solving skills.

Religious literacy in this application-ready sense has at least three dimensions. To be religiously literate one needs to have a working understanding of (a) *one's own* belief system or faith tradition, especially what it says about (engaging) persons outside that tradition, (b) *one's neighbor's* moral, epistemological, and spiritual framework, and what that framework says about engaging the other, and (c) the historical and contemporary particulars of the specific contexts in which multi-faith collaborations may (or may not) be advisable—that is, the spiritual, ethnic, and/or organizational cultures relevant to developing and implementing a project or program collaboratively.

Finally, a third set of enabling conditions, closely related to the second, is the embodiment and expression of *virtues* that a positive ethos of nonrelativistic pluralism requires. Covenantal pluralism is hard work, and there is no retirement age. It promises no utopia,

no end of history. The global business of living together with our differences is ongoing, and it is the duty of each generation to bequeath it to the next, and teach the virtues that make it possible. As such, covenantal pluralism requires a praxis and continual cultivation of the character traits needed for robust, sustained engagement between people of different religions/worldviews—foremost, virtues such as humility, empathy, patience, and courage, combined with fairness, reciprocity, cooperativeness, self-critique, and self-correction.

The wider the underlying divides, the more vital such virtues become. The politics of pluralism do not always conform to a simple script (Brink 2012) with a happy ending of "common ground." The real world of engaging across deep difference is riskier, and messier. Usually *some* common ground will be identified and strengthened, but there will also be cases in which disagreements will merely be defined in greater detail. To live peacefully and amicably with these less-than-tidy realities—to "agree to disagree, agreeably" wherever possible—requires a maturity of character. Such dialogical virtues are crucial to what Sir John Templeton meant by "humility in theology." Sir John argued that progress in the context of religion depends in large part on a respectful manner of engagement of those with whom one disagrees (Herrmann 2004).

Key to this requisite disposition is mutual respect. As Lenn Goodman (2014, 1) argues in *Religious Pluralism and Values in the Public Sphere*, "Religious tolerance does not mean homogenizing. Pluralism preserves differences. What it asks for is respect." Respect values the essence of the other's identity, without sacrificing the substance of one's own. In other words, "respecting" the other does not necessarily lend moral equivalence to any and every belief. Indeed, to feign agreement when profound issues are actually in dispute can be a form of disrespect. Respect simply means that everyone should respect the inherent dignity of every human, including the innate

liberty of conscience of the other even if the conclusions drawn are different from one's own. Pluralism is, after all, the inevitable result of liberty of conscience.

Consequently, within a society characterized by covenantal pluralism, the kinds of bridges built between religions are better described as *multi*-faith than "interfaith." "Multi-faith" more clearly signals the existence of irreconcilable theological differences between and among faiths and worldviews. These differences need not be foregrounded in every conversation or project, but in some contexts acknowledgment and principled engagement of such differences is important to, at a minimum, demonstrate respect for the essence of someone else's identity. And, in our experience, once that moment arrives, the practical collaboration accelerates afterwards.

The word "interfaith," by contrast, tends to suggest a blending of theologies. Too easily, interfaith dialogues steer clear of or (worse) effectively water down deep differences. While interfaith dialogues can helpfully highlight shared values, too often they end up focusing on banal commonalities rather than leveraging the contrasts between the rich and to some degree divergent traditions at the table. Discovering common beliefs and values only has meaning when the richness of the different points of moral departure are also understood.

Conclusion

In the history of social theory there is no shortage of pessimism regarding the effects of deep religious diversity and contestation on a society. Lack of moral/epistemological uniformity has often been feared as a source of political instability and social pathology. The philosophy of covenantal pluralism takes a more nuanced view, one that is conditionally optimistic about the possibility of living, and living *well*, with our differences.

In contrast to the sometimes thin rhetoric of tolerance, the concept of covenantal pluralism acknowledges the complex challenges

presented by deep diversity and offers a holistic conception of the structures and norms that are conducive to fairness and flourishing for all, even amidst stark differences in theologies, values, and lifestyles. Covenantal pluralism

- calls forth and is nurtured by common virtues indigenous to each tradition (e.g. humility, empathy, patience), encouraging self-reflection regarding theological/worldview differences and what one's holy scriptures and ethics say about engaging the other;
- seeks a level playing field where all people—of any religion, or none—are treated with equal respect;
- leverages our difference, guided by the idea that the best solutions to the problems we face emerge most effectively amidst contrast and the competition of ideas, always in the interest of the common good;
- pursues the equal opportunity for everyone to propose their beliefs and behavior without imposing them on others;
- supports an inclusive notion of citizenship (including those who make exclusive truth claims) that is good for society and the state; and,
- results in the integration of the non-majority, not its assimilation, never insisting that minorities must think and act exactly like the majority.

Unfortunately, in many nations today—including even some of those that rhetorically trumpet religious liberty and diversity—covenantal pluralism remains a path not (fully) taken. Yet signposts for this path abound; precedents and potentialities of covenantal pluralism exist the world over. Further, the (re)discovery of covenantal pluralism is, we contend, not only the right thing to do in terms of universal moral ideals, but also a realistic strategy for

progress toward a society's enlightened self-interest. To the extent any nation follows (or recovers) the historically narrower, typically less traveled path of covenantal pluralism, it will redound to the long-term benefit of both religion and state. But when a people or state choose the historically wider, much more traveled path of "Puritanical" (whether fundamentalist or secularist) uniformity, there is less hope for the well-being of all citizens, all neighbors. Cultivating a context of covenantal pluralism increases the likelihood that people of profoundly different points of religious and epistemological departure nevertheless engage one another across their differences in a spirited way, and contribute to a peaceable neighborhood for all.

References

Basham, Arthur Llewellyn. 1954. *The Wonder that was India*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson.

Bhargava, Rajeev. 2012. "How Should States Deal with Deep Religious Diversity?" In Timothy Samuel Shah, Alfred Stepan, and Monica Duffy Toft, eds., *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 73-84.

Barry, John. 2012. *Roger Williams and The Creation of the American Soul*. New York: Viking.

Bejan, Teresa M. 2017. *Mere Civility: Disagreement and the Limits of Toleration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Berger, Peter L. 2014. *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age*. Boston: De Gruyter.

Brink, Paul A. November 2012. "Politics Without Scripts." *Comment magazine*. Hamilton, ON: Cardus: https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/politics-without-scripts/. Accessed May 13, 2020.

_____. 2003. "Debating International Human Rights: The 'Middle Ground' for Religious Participants." *The Review of Faith and International Affairs* 1(2): 13-20.

Carlson-Thies, Stanley. 2018. "The Dissatisfactions—and Blessings!—of

Civic Pluralism" *Public Justice Review* 8 (4). https://cpjustice.org/index.php/public/page/content/pjr_vol8issue4_no1_carlsonthies_dissatisfactions_b.

Chaplin, Jonathan. 2016. "*Liberté, Laicité, Pluralité*: Towards a Theology of Principled Pluralism." *International Journal of Public Theology* 10: 354-380.

Connolly, William E. 2005. *Pluralism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Davis, James Calvin, ed. 2008. *On Religious Liberty: Selections from the Works of Roger Williams*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Douglas, Mary. 1970. *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*. New York: Pantheon.

Eberle, Edward J. 2004. "Another of Roger Williams's Gifts: Women's Right to Liberty of Conscience: Joshua Verin v. Providence Plantations." *Roger Williams University Law Review*, Spring.

Eck, Diana. n.d. "What is Pluralism?" Pluralism Project website, Harvard University, https://pluralism.org/about. Accessed April 20, 2020.

_____. 2020. "From Diversity to Pluralism," The Pluralism Project, https://pluralism.org/from-diversity-to-pluralism. Accessed May 12, 2020.

Gaustad, Edwin S. 1999. *Liberty of Conscience: Roger Williams in America*. King of Prussia, PA: Judson Press.

Geiss, Mary Ellen. 2020. "These Colleges Want to Make Their Campuses Laboratories for Bridging Divides." The Aspen Institute. https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/these-colleges-want-to-make-their-campuses-laboratories-for-bridging-divides/. Accessed May 12, 2020.

Glendon, Mary Ann. 2001. *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. New York: Random House.

Goodman, Len. 2014. *Religious Pluralism and Values in the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Guinness, Os. 2013. *The Global Public Square: Religious Freedom and the Making of a World Safe for Diversity*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press.

Hefner, Robert W. 2106. "Going Global: An Anthropology of the Two Pluralisms." *Society* 53(1): 13-19.

Herrmann, Robert. 2004. *Sir John Templeton: Supporting Scientific Research for Spiritual Discoveries*. Revised Edition. Radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation Press.

Hoover, Dennis R. 2016. "Pluralist Responses to Pluralist Realties in the United

States." *Society* 53(1): 20–27.

_____, ed. 2014. *Religion and American Exceptionalism*. Oxford: Routledge.

Hurd, Elizabeth Shakman. 2015. *Beyond Religious Freedom: The New Global Politics of Religion*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Inazu, John. 2016. *Confident Pluralism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Joustra, Robert. 2020. "The Coordinates of Covenantal Pluralism: Mapping Pluralist Theory in the 21st Century." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 18(4): 18–34, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15570274.2020.1834994.

Keller, Timothy and John Inazu. 2020. *Uncommon Ground: Living Faithfully in a World of Difference.* Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Mackinder, Halford John. 1996 [1919]. *Democratic Ideals and Reality: A Study in the Politics of Reconstruction*. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press. Defense Classic Edition.

Maclure, Jocelyn and Charles Taylor. 2011. *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Mahmood, Saba. 2016. *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Marsden, George. February 2015. "A More Inclusive Pluralism: A Constructive Proposal for Religion in a Pluralistic Society." *First Things*. https://www.firstthings.com/article/2015/02/a-more-inclusive-pluralism. Accessed May 14, 2020.

Monsma, Stephen. 1992. *Positive Neutrality*. New York: Praeger.

Neo, Jaclyn. 2020. "Regulating Pluralism: Laws on Religious Harmony and Possibilities for Robust Pluralism in Singapore." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 18(3): 1–15.

Patel, Eboo. February 2020. "The Campus and the Culture Wars." *Inside Higher Ed*. https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/conversations-diversity/campus-and-culture-wars. Accessed May 14, 2020.

_____. 2018. *Out of Many Faiths: Religious Diversity and the American Promise*. New

Jersey: Princeton University Press.

_____. 2016. *Interfaith Leadership: A Primer*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Patton, James. 2018. "Including the Exclusivists in Interfaith." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 16(3): 23–33.

Patton, Laurie L. 2018. "Plural America Needs Myths: An Essay in Foundational Narratives in Response to Eboo Patel." In Eboo Patel, *Out of Many Faiths: Religious Diversity and the American Promise* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press), 151-179.

_____. 2006. "Toward a Pragmatic Pluralism." *Emory Magazine.* https://www.emory.edu/EMORY_MAGAZINE/autumn2006/essay_pluralism.htm. Accessed May 12, 2020.

Pew Research Center. 2018. "Global Uptick in Restrictions on Religion," June 21, https://www.pewforum.org/2018/06/21/global-uptick-in-government-restrictions-on-religion-in-2016/.

Prothero, Stephen. 2010a. *God is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions the Run the World—and Why Their Differences Matter*. San Francisco: HarperOne.

Prothero, Stephen. 2010b. "Religious Differences are Real (and Tolerance can be an Empty Virtue)." *Religion Dispatches*, June 24, https://religiondispatches.org/religious-differences-are-real-and-tolerance-can-be-an-empty-virtue/.

Repucci, Sarah. 2020. "Freedom in the World 2020: A Leaderless Struggle for Democracy." Washington, DC: Freedom House. https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2020/leaderless-struggle-democracy.

Rowley, Matthew. 2017. "All Pretend an Holy War": Radical Beliefs and the Rejection of Persecution in the Mind of Roger Williams." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 15(2): 66-76.

Sacks, Jonathan. 2007. *The Home We Build Together: Recreating Society*. London: Continuum.

Sacks, Jonathan. 2002. *The Dignity of Difference*. London: Continuum.

Seiple, Chris. 2018a. "Faith Can Overcome Religious Nationalism: Here's How." World Economic Forum, April 18, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/04/faith-can-overcome-religious-nationalism-heres-how/. Accessed April 12, 2020.

_____. 2018b. "The Call of Covenantal Pluralism." Templeton Lecture on Religion and World Affairs, October 30. Foreign Policy Research Institute, https://www.fpri.org/article/2018/11/the-call-of-covenantal-pluralism-defeating-religious-nationalism-with-faithful-patriotism/. Accessed April 12, 2020.

_____. 2012. "The Essence of Exceptionalism: Roger Williams and the Birth

of Religious Freedom in America." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 10(2): 13-19.

Seiple, Chris and Dennis R. Hoover. 2013. "Religious Freedom and Global Security." In Allen D. Hertzke, ed., *The Future of Religious Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 315-330.

Seiple, Robert A. and Dennis R. Hoover. 2004. *Religion & Security: The New Nexus in International Relations*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Seligman, Adam, Rachel Wasserfall, and David W. Montgomery. 2016. *Living with Difference: How to Build Community in a Divided World*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Singha, Sara. 2017. *Hinduism and Religious Freedom: A Sourcebook of Scriptural, Theological, and Legal Texts*. Washington, DC: Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, Georgetown University.

Skillen, James W. 1994. *Recharging the American Experiment: Principled Pluralism for Genuine Civic Community*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books.

Soper, Chris, Kevin den Dulk, and Stephen Monsma. 2017. *The Challenge of Pluralism: Church and State in Six Democracies*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Stewart, W. Christopher. 2018. "Ministerial Philanthropy Panel Remarks at US State Department," July 24, https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2018/10/Ministerial-Panel-Remarks-23JULY2018-Chris-Stewart-1.pdf?_ga=2.146392060.956419236.1585346935-1222409484.1584028242. Accessed April 12, 2020.

Taylor, Charles. April-August 2010. "Solidarity in a Pluralist Age." *IWMpost*. Newsletter of the Institut fűr die Wissenschaften vom Mencschen. No. 104.

Templeton John. 2000. *Possibilities for Over One Hundredfold More Spiritual Information: The Humble Approach in Theology and Science*. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press.

_____. 1998. *The Humble Approach*. West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press.

Volf, Miroslav. 2015. *Flourishing: Why We Need Religion in a Globalized World*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

_____. 2011. "Pluralism as a Political Project for Exclusivist Christians and Muslims." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 9(3): 51-62.

Yang, Fenggang. 2014. "Agency-Driven Secularization and Chinese Experiments in Multiple Modernities." In Peter L. Berger, *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age* (Boston: De Gruyter), 123-140.

About the Authors

W. Christopher Stewart (Ph.D., Philosophy, University of Notre Dame) is the Vice President, Grant Programs and Chief Grants Officer of the Templeton Religion Trust, headquartered in The Bahamas. He joined the Trust in 2013, after 20 years on the faculty of Houghton College, where he served as Professor of Philosophy and Associate Dean of Biblical Studies, Theology, and Philosophy.

Chris Seiple (Ph.D., The Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy) is President Emeritus of the Institute for Global Engagement and Principal Advisor to the Templeton Religion Trust's Covenantal Pluralism Initiative. A former U.S. Marine infantry officer, he is Senior Fellow for Comparative Religion at the University of Washington's Jackson School of International Studies, and Senior Advisor to the U.S. Agency for International Development's Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives.

Dennis R. Hoover (D.Phil. Politics, University of Oxford) is Editor of *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, Research Advisor for the Templeton Religion Trust's Covenantal Pluralism Initiative, and Senior Fellow at the Institute for Global Engagement. He is editor of *Religion and American Exceptionalism* (2014), as well as co-editor of *Religion and Foreign Affairs* (2012) and two Routledge Handbooks: *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Security* (2012), and a forthcoming handbook on religious literacy, pluralism, and engagement.

Acknowledgements

This paper was commissioned as part of a project supported by the Templeton Religion Trust, the Issachar Fund, and the Institute for Global Engagement.

(Endnotes)

1 Quoted in Barry 2012, 220.

2 In the increasingly commonplace "COEXIST" and "TOLERANCE" bumper stickers, each letter is artfully rendered as a symbol of a different group or concept. In the "COEXIST" bumper sticker, typically the "C" is the Islamic crescent, the "O" is a peace sign, the "E" is a gender symbol, the X" is a Star of David, dot of the "I" is a

pagan pentagram, the "S" is a yin-yang symbol, and the "T" is a Christian cross. The "TOLERANCE" version—which for good measure includes the tagline "Believe in it"—adds Native American and Baha'i symbols, and even a nod to science (the last "e" is Einstein's formula e=mc2).

3 The Templeton Religion Trust (https://templetonreligiontrust.org/), headquartered in The Bahamas, is a global charitable trust established by Sir John Templeton (d. 2008) to support research and public engagement worldwide at the intersection of theology, philosophy, and the sciences, and to promote human flourishing by funding projects in the areas of individual freedom, free markets, character development, and through its support of the Templeton Prize.

4 Portions of this section are adapted from Seiple 2012.

5 It's worth noting that the theme of neighborliness would emerge in powerfully analogous ways centuries later in the thought of Halford John Mackinder, who argued in early 1919 as he tried to influence the Versailles Peace Treaty: "That grand old word neighbor has fallen almost into desuetude. It is for neighborliness that the world today calls aloud…Let us recover possession of ourselves, lest we become the mere slaves of the world's geography … Neighborliness or fraternal duty to those who are our fellow-dwellers, is the only sure foundation of a happy citizenship" (Mackinder 1919).

6 Williams's ideas about religious tolerance influenced John Locke, who in turn was a major influence on key founders of the United States. For an illuminating comparison of Williams, Locke, and Hobbes, see Bejan 2017.

7 For related resources see Singha 2017.

8 For the full text of this letter see the Founders Online section of the National Archives website: https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-06-02-0135.

9 However it is important not to assume a clean binary contrast between pre-modern conditions of taken-for-granted religious "fate" and modern conditions of uncertainty and "choice." As Robert Hefner (2016, 16) has argued, it is a mistake to "see all premodern actors as inhabiting densely religious worlds in which the natural and supernatural are so interwoven that there is little room for uncertainty or agnostic doubt." See also Douglas (1970) on the "myth of the pious primitive."

10 While there are insights that can be drawn from particularist covenantal theologies and applied generically *by analogy*, the philosophy of covenantal pluralism is secular.

11 The notion of "conditions of possibility" is adapted from the thought of German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who changed the course of philosophy in the West by focusing not on whether it is possible for humanity to know anything at all but rather on the conditions of possibility for human knowledge.

RESOURCE PERSON PROFILE

Chris Seiple (Senior Research Fellow, University of Washington)

Dr. Chris Seiple is Senior Research Fellow for Comparative Religion at the University of Washington's Jackson School of International Studies, where he first developed Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy. He is also the Principal Advisor to the Templeton Religion Trust and President Emeritus of the Institute for Global Engagement. He is widely known and sought after for his decades of experience and expertise regarding issues at the intersection of geopolitics, US foreign policy, Asia, conflict resolution, human rights and religion. He is a co-editor of the forthcoming Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism, and Global Engagement. Follow Chris Seiple on Twitter: @cseiple

PART 2

THE PERSONAL COMPETENCY

ISLAM - THE PERSONAL COMPETENCY

Dr Alwi Shihab

To further understand Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy (LKLB, for its acronym in Indonesian) from the perspective of Islam, we can use the three People of the Book religions, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam, as an example. These three religions are often elaborated in the Qur'an and are related to LKLB. In general, they have many similar tenets owing to their historical roots, although over the course of the history of these three divinely revealed religions, a great deal of friction and even conflicts and wars occured among them which continues even to this day, for which we need to study the causes.

The historical roots of these three divinely revealed religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) harken back to the primary figure who received the title of *Abul Anbiya*, which means 'the father of the prophets', namely Prophet Abraham. He was a highly respected figure, and the monotheistic teachings of these three divinely revealed religions or People of the Book religions originated from him. Throughout the course of history, the associations of these three religions have often been unconducive in establishing good relations, due to occurrences and perceptions that may have been erroneous and not in accordance with the tenets taught by the People of the Book religions. In light of this, we should aspire to imitate the Prophets, especially Prophet Abraham, his conduct, fundamental principles, and journeys, which in

some measure are preserved in the *hajj*, the religious journey of Muslims to Mecca. The Qur'an states:

> *"There is for you An excellent example (to follow) In Abraham" (Sūra 60: Mumtahana, 4).*

This begs the question, was Prophet Abraham a Christian or a Jew? The Qur'an answers:

> *"Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian but he was true in faith and bowed his will to God's (which is Islam) and he joined not gods with God." (Sūra 3:* **Āl-i-***'Imrān, 67)*

Personal Competence

To be able to interact with the three divinely revealed religions, personal competence is required. Personal competence is where we study these three religions, that is, Islam, Judaism and Christianity, then draw out the core of each of their teachings and understand them well, so that we can interact with the other religious adherents. By virtue of this, we are compelled to continually make an effort to study history and comprehend the meaning of a certain verse or the conduct of Prophet Muhammad as a model for us, Muslims, so we do not stray from these fundamental principles. Muslims are encouraged to:

"Do they not then Earnestly seek to understand The Qur-ān, or are Their hearts locked up By them?" (Sūra 47: Muhammad, 24)

The verse above can mean to make the effort to study the Qur'an and reflect on its verses.

Furthermore, there are also other verses,

"We have explained (things) In various (ways) in this Qur-ān, In order that they may receive Admonition, but it only increases Their flight (from the Truth) !" (Sūra 17: Al-Isrā, 41)

"We relate to thee their story In truth : they were youths Who believed in their Lord, And We advanced them In guidance" (Sūra 18: Kahf, 13).

People of the Book

Who are the People of the Book and why are they called as such? The People of the Book are the religious adherents who believe in and conform to the holy book which comes from God, and these are the believers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is emphasized in the Quran:

"It is He Who sent down to thee (step by step) in truth the Book confirming what went before it; and He sent down Law (Of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus)" (Sūra 3: **Āl-i**-'Imrān, 3) can be interpreted to mean that when the Qur'an came down, it declared the Torah and the Gospel to be inherently true,

"O ye people of the Book! believe in what We have (now) revealed confirming what was (already) with you" (Sūra 4: Nisāa, 47).

Because these three religions are so closely related, the Qur'an invites the People of the Book to find a common ground,

"Say: "O people of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you:

that we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not from among ourselves Lords and patrons other than God." If then they turn back say: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to God's will)."" (Sūra 3: **Āl-i**-'Imrān, 64), to be able to work together and establish good relationships, so that there will no longer be contentions as well as thinking that one is always right.

The People of the Book represents one family, one heritage and embodies a belief system that originated from the Prophet Abraham.

The Interaction of the Islamic Community with the People of the Book

Their relations have had its ups and downs, which started with a history of bloodshed but is now gradually improving. Before the Prophet migrated, wars between the Persian and Roman empires went on for centuries. These wars even lasted for 7 centuries, with the victor changing hands from one to the other. The Polytheists, or those groups who do not believe in the Prophet, mocked him

because of the polytheistic Romans, who regarded this household of Islam as the ones defeated by the Persians. But Allah has spoken:

"The Roman Empire Has been defeated— In a land close by ; But they, (even) after (This) defeat of theirs, Will soon be victorious— " (Sūra 30: Rūm, 2-3), which can mean that after experiencing defeat it turned into victory in a few years time.

The Prophet and his close companions had a closer relationship with the Persians, rather than the Romans, because of their similar monotheistic stance, with both sides believing in the existence of one God. When Mecca was in a critical state, the Prophet advised his close companions to emigrate to Ethiopia, because there was a Catholic ruler there who was wise and very benevolent. The wise Catholic ruler, Najashi, welcomed the entourage of the Prophet's close companions who asked for his protection, and they were warmly received in Ethiopia. Although the enemies of the Prophet opposed it, Najashi, however, wanted to know what religion the Prophet Muhammad espoused, and in the end when Najashi died, the Prophet invited his close companions to pray for him.

The Similarities of the Traditions of the People of the Book

In the Jewish and Christian traditions, they have the ten commandments, and the first commandment is to worship the one Supreme God, just like the Qur'an,

"Allah! there is no God but He" (Sūra 2: Baqara, 255). Another similarity is that when preparing to come before God, Prophet Moses and Prophet Jesus were also commanded to cleanse themselves, just as Muslims are commanded to perform ablutions before praying. Likewise, when worshiping, Prophet Moses and Prophet Jesus prostrated themselves on the ground, just like the Muslims do when praying. In the Qur'an it is also written:

"This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto

them. (Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers but chaste women among the People of the Book revealed before your time when ye give them their due dowers and desire chastity not lewdness nor secret intrigues. If anyone rejects faith fruitless is his work and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good)." (Sūra 5: Māida, 5), which can mean that the animal sacrifices of the People of the Book are considered halal for Muslims and a Muslim can marry a People of the Book.

The Prophet's Treatment of the People of the Book

The Jews in Medina were very dominant in the field of economics and thus, very influential. However, they have some practices in place which were not in accordance with Islamic teachings, and so the arrival of Prophet Muhammad in Medina was deemed as damaging their stability and supremacy. When the Prophet entered the scene, he proclaimed a community that was inclusive, gathering all elements of society from all tribes and clans, irrespective of their religious affiliation, and this included the Jewish community. By mutual agreement, the constitution of Medina was born:

1. Regulates the political system, security, freedom of religion, and equality before the law.
2. Jews, Muslims and other groups obtain common rights and duties in dealing with aggressors.

We must be aware of this when we are interpreting verses concerning Jews, and there is a verse which states that Christians are very close to Muslims. According to Muslim history at that time, there were no Christian groups in Medina; they live around the Arabian Peninsula, in Najran. On behalf of Christians living in the Arabian Peninsula, Prophet Muhammad welcomed a delegation from Najran, and he explained the core of his teachings to them. Even though they decided not to follow the teachings of the

Prophet Muhammad, they chose to still be on good terms with him. This gave birth to a treaty between the Prophet Muhammad and the Christian delegation of Najran:

1. In the event that Christians need help, Muslims must help them, even in building churches, and should not consider it as debt.
2. It is not permissible to force any People of the Book to convert to Islam even though the wife is Jewish or Christian.

The Mandates of the Qur'an in Interacting with the People of the Book

Positive Interactions among the People of the Book is immortalised in the Qur'an

1. Advocating dialogue in a manner that is agreeable,

   "And dispute ye not With the People of the Book, Except with means better (Than mere disputation)" (Sūra 29: Ankabūt, 46)

2. Being kind and just to those who do not fight against us and drive us out of our own country,

   "God forbids you not, With regard to those who Fight you not for (your) Faith Nor drive you out Of your homes, From dealing kindly and justly With them : For God loveth Those who are just." (Sūra 60: Mumtahana, 8)

3. Inviting them towards points of similarity

   "Say: "O people of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not from among ourselves Lords and patrons other than God." If then they turn back say: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to God's will).""" (Sūra 3: **Āl-i**-'Imrān, 64)

4. Respecting each other's tenets and ways,

   "To thee We sent the Scripture in truth confirming the scripture that came before it and guarding it in safety; so judge between them by what God hath revealed and follow not their vain desires diverging from the truth that hath come to thee. To each among you have We prescribed a Law and an Open Way. If God had so willed He would have made you a single people but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to God; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute." (Sūra 5: Māida, 48)

5. Accepting the path of peace,

   "But if the enemy incline towards peace do thou (also) incline towards peace and trust in God: for He is the one that heareth and knoweth (all things)." (Sūra 8: Anfāl, 61)

The Perspective of the Qur'an on the People of the Book

The Qur'an gives guidance to Muslims; it is not acceptable to generalize that all the People of the Book are heretics and will be placed in hell, because it is not in accordance with these verses:

"Not all of them are alike: of the People of the book are a portion that stand (for the right); they rehearse the signs of God all night long and then prostrate themselves in adoration." (Sūra 3: **Āl–i**-'Imrān, 113)

"Those who believe (in the Qur'an) and those who follow the Jewish (Scriptures) and the Christians and the Sabians and who believe in God and the last day and work righteousness shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve." (Sūra 2: Baqara, 62),

"Those who believe (in the Qur'an) those who follow the Jewish (Scriptures) and the Sabians and the Christians any who believe in God and the Last Day and work righteousness on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve." (Sūra 5: Māida, 69)

The Prophet's Interactions with the Christians and Jews

In the Qur'an there are three names mentioned as belonging to the Jewish group:

1. **Al-Yahud** ('the Jew') - has a negative connotation, but not all criticisms are directed at the Jews. It is mentioned in the Qur'an

   "Strongest among men in enmity to the believers wilt thou find the Jews and Pagans; and nearest among them in love to the believers wilt thou find those who say: "We are Christians:" because amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world and they are not arrogant." (Sūra 5: Māida, 82),

   "The Jews call 'Uzair a son Of God, and the Christians Call Christ the Son of God. That is a saying from their mouth; (In this) they but imitate What the Unbelievers of old Used to say. God's curse Be on them: how they are deluded Away from the Truth !" (Sūra 9: Tauba, 30),

   "The Jews say: "God's hand is tied up." Be their hands tied up and be they accursed for the (blasphemy) they utter. Nay both His hands are widely outstretched: He giveth and spendeth (of His bounty) as He pleaseth. But the revelation that cometh to thee from God increaseth in most of them their obstinate rebellion and blasphemy. Amongst them We have placed enmity and hatred till the Day of Judgment. Every time they kindle the fire of war God doth extinguish it; but they (ever) strive to do mischief on earth. And God loveth not those who do mischief." (Sūra 5: Māida, 64)

2. **Bani Israel** ('the sons of Israel') - the descendants of Jacob (Israel), including: Prophet Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Solomon, Job, Zechariah, John the Baptist and Jesus, were bestowed prominence by God in the Qur'an,

   "Those were some Of the prophets on whom God did bestow His

Grace,— Of the posterity of Adam, And of those whom We Carried (in the Ark) With Noah, and of The posterity of Abraham And Israel—of those Whom We guided and chose. Whenever the Signs Of (God) Most Gracious Were rehearsed to them, They would fall down In prostrate adoration And in tears." (Sūra 19: Maryam, 58)

"O children of Israel! call to mind the (special) favor which I bestowed upon You and that I preferred you to all others (for My message)." (Sūra 2: Baqara, 47)

3. **Alladzina Hadu** - is the designation for Jews who are good and had already repented,

   "Those who believe (in the Qur'an) and those who follow the Jewish (Scriptures) and the Christians and the Sabians and who believe in God and the last day and work righteousness shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve." (Sūra 2: Baqara, 62)

The Emergence of Conflict, Hatred and Hostility

These wayward and condemned actions or behaviors are often the result of human greed for power, wealth, etc. This greed can control anyone regardless of the racial, ethnic, or religious background. We can see these instances in the history of the interactions among Muslims, Christians, and Jews. The following examples of conflicts are political and economic conflicts of interest, not religious conflicts:

1. Romans vs Persians, fought to remain in power and establish influence as well as to silence opponents
2. Battle of Badr (624 CE), the Polytheists of Mecca wanted to suppress Islam adherents
3. Battle of Uhud (625 CE), an attempt by the Polytheists of Mecca to avenge their defeat at Badr, helped by a Jewish tribe
4. Khandaq War / Battle of the Ditch (627 CE), the Polytheists were

aided by some Jewish tribes

5. Battle of Khaybar (628 CE), between the Jews and the Muslims. There was a move to incite the Banu Qurayzah tribe to break off their agreement,

   "And it is He Who Has restrained their hands From you and your hands From them in the midst Of Mecca, after that He Gave you the victory Over them. And God sees Well all that ye do." (Sūra 48: Fat-h, 24)
6. Battle of Tabuk (630 CE), the last expedition of the Prophet; there was a plan by the Roman rulers to attack the Islamic forces, and it ended with the withdrawal of the Roman army to avoid confrontation.
7. Battle of Yarmouk (4 years after the Prophet's death) was led by Khalid ibn al-Walid, a major battle between the Byzantine army and the Islamic forces to capture the northern part of the caravan route from Mecca. It ended with the collapse of Byzantine rule in Syria.

History of Positive Relations between Religious Communities

The history of positive relations during the Prophet's time is being repeated since the time of the Second Vatican Council which was opened by Pope John XXIII in 1963 and closed by Pope Paul VI in 1965, and it ensued the Declaration of Nostra Aetate which contained the following:

- The church opens itself to dialogue and creates mutual understanding, and views other religions positively, especially the People of the Book.
- Inviting the People of the Book and other religions to attend as brothers and sisters in positive collaborations,

  "To each is a goal to which God turns him; then strive together (as in a race) toward all that is good. Wheresoever ye are God will bring you together. For God hath power over all things." (Sūra 2: Baqara, 148)

- Prioritizing human values and its honor when interacting, without regard to religion, race, ethnicity and social status.

The positive relations between religious communities are in keeping with the messages contained in the Qur'an

- Human values,

  "We have honoured the sons Of Adam ; provided them With transport on land and sea ; Given them for sustenance things Good and pure ; and conferred On them special favours, Above a great part Of Our Creation." (Sūra 17: Al-Isrā, 70)

- Knowing each other and understanding one another,

  "O mankind ! We created You from a single (pair) Of a male and a female, And made you into Nations and tribes, that Ye may know each other (Not that ye may despise Each other). Verily The most honoured of you In the sight of God Is (he who is) the most Righteous of you. And God has full knowledge And is well acquainted (With all things)." (Sūra 49: Hujurāt, 13)

- Including other communities in prayers of goodwill,

  "And remember Abraham said: "My Lord make this a City of Peace and feed its people with fruits such of them as believe in God and the Last Day." He said: "(Yea) and such as reject faith for a while will I grant them their pleasure but will soon drive them to the torment of fire an evil destination (indeed)!"" (Sūra 2: Baqara, 126)

*English translations of the Qur'an texts in this document are copied from *The Holy Qur'an: Translation by A. Yusuf Ali* (Online source: https://quranyusufali.com/).

*This document has been prepared for the Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy (LKLB, for its acronym in Indonesian) program, October 2021 – June 2022

ISLAM - THE PERSONAL COMPETENCY

MUTUAL UNDERSTAND WHAT MY RELIGION TEACHES

WITH A MULTI-, INTER-, & TRANSDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

M. Amin Abdullah

MADRASAH EDUCATION IN INDONESIA

Religious education and Islamic education in the homeland underwent a process of evolution. At first, religious education was known more as *surau* (Islamic assembly building) or *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) education which existed in the archipelago long before the arrival of the Dutch. At the end of the Dutch occupation, they introduced the form of education in schools such as the ones that exist in Europe. If religious education via *pesantren* method only focuses on religious sciences (*'Ulumu al-din*) such as the Qur'an, *Tafsir* (explanation of the Qur'an), *Hadith* (records of the sayings of Prophet Muhammad), *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *Kalam* (Islamic speculative theology), and Arabic language, in comparison, school education is completely different. In school education, general

sciences are introduced, such as arithmetic, natural science, earth science, history, social science and so forth.

Madrasah education is the result of the *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) of education policy makers in Indonesia. The combination, merger and meeting point between the two forms of education is the madrasah education system. The said combination can be seen in the curriculum. General education – as per the education in schools – comprises 70%, while religious sciences – as per the education in *pesantren* – about 30%. Education reform via the madrasah education model was issued in the Joint Decree of 3 Ministries circa 1975, namely the Ministry of Religion, the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Home Affairs. At that time, 'ministry' was called 'department'. In that way, students who graduated from madrasas can pursue further studies at public universities wherever they are in the country without any obstacles. It is the same with the education levels below it. Compared to religious schools in Pakistan, Indonesia is already far ahead. These were the conclusions of a webinar in collaboration with the Indonesian Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan and the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), with the theme "Madrassa Reforms: Indonesia Experiences", on July 29, 2021.[1]

According to the 2021 data of the Ministry of Religion, madrasas in Indonesia consist of Raudhatul Athfal, Ibtidaiyyah, Tsanawiyyah and Aliyah totaling approximately 82,408 madrasas. Only 5% of that total (4,010 madrasas) are funded by the government through the Ministry of Religion, while 95% (78,408 madrasas) are under private management. 15,582 madrasas out of a total of 78,408 are under the management of Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah organizations. Under the auspices of Nahdhatul Ulama, there are 12,674 madrasas registered in the Maarif NU Educational Institutions,[2] while under Muhammadiyah, there are 1,908 madrasas registered in the Muhammadiyah Primary

1 https://pakistaneconomicnet.com/story/27883/; juga https://afkarpak.com/6647.

2 https://m.republika.co.id/berita/qc2dg4430/lp.maarif-nu-inventarisasi-sekolah-dan-madrasah

and Secondary Education.[3] The rest are managed by other Islamic organizations. The government supervises private madrasas which are registered in the Ministry of Religion. The breakdown of 916,449 total number of madrasah teachers are as follows: 128,145 from Raudhatul Athfal; 314,957 from Ibtidaiyah Madrasah; 312,314 from Tsanawiyyah Madrasah and 161,033 from Aliyah Madrasah.[4]

RELIGIONS IN THE GLOBAL ERA

Globalization has changed the demography and landscape of religious life. In today's era, it can be said, where there are Muslims, there are also Christians. Where there are Christians, there are also Jews. In many big cities around the world, especially in Europe and the United States, there are Jews, as well as Muslims and Christians, too. Borderless society which is facilitated by internet connection – just as we are doing in this webinar right now via online - renders conversations and encounters between followers and leaders of religions in the digital world increasingly unavoidable. A greater inter-faith interaction is becoming real in the global world and it feels urgent to carry out modifications and renew the education blueprint in general and religious education in particular.

The world of education in general and Islamic education in particular needs to be equipped with religious literacy, not only about world religions, but especially regarding Abrahamic religions, through education. In today's sphere of education, students only know or are literate about their own religion. Even then their education does not necessarily cover all schools of thought, branches, ideologies, organizations or denominations that exist. But what is certain is that they do not know and are not yet acquainted with or are illiterate about those religions embraced by other people and other groups that are different from them. When in fact we all agree that only through a good education can human civilization become more mature and

3 https://dikdasmenppmuhammadiyah.org/dapodikmu-jumlah-madrasah/]

4 http://emispendis.kemenag.go.id/dashboard/

developed. Our education is not yet able to accommodate the needs of the changing times. The current religious teachers in service are solely equipped and prepared to teach their own religion, without being provided an introduction and understanding of other people's religion. When students, be it primary, secondary or university, return to the wider society, they do not have a picture and no resources at all regarding world religions, including Abrahamic religions. Placed in actual community life, they face diversity and plurality of religions and beliefs in a real sense, but they are without sufficient knowledge and experience to face and deal with it.

RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE, INDONESIA'S EXPERIENCES

Since the 1970s, inter-religious dialogue was already present in the homeland due to the realization of the diversity and plurality of religions in Indonesia. In Indonesia, inter-religious dialogue has become an inseparable part of the government's task, especially the Ministry of Religion and adherents of different religions. It is unfortunate though that in the stages of education, at each level, the introduction or literacy to world religions or cross cultural religious literacy is in fact neglected.

The Institute for the Study of Religious Harmony (LPKUB, for its acronym in Indonesian) was formed in 1993, during the first religious congress in the city of Yogyakarta. Subsequently, in 2001, at a time when conflicts between ethnicity, religion, race and inter-group relations (SARA, for its acronym in Indonesian) were rampant in Indonesia, the Center for Religious Harmony (PKUB, for its acronym in Indonesian) was established. Meanwhile, the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB, for its acronym in Indonesian) was founded in 2006, in conjunction with the issuance of the Joint Ministerial Regulations (PBM, for its acronym in Indonesian) numbers 9 and 8 of 2006. FKUB was formed by the community and facilitated by the government. FKUB already exists in 34 provinces and 509 regencies/cities out of a total of 514.[5]

5 Sekretariat Jenderal Kementrian Agama Republik Indonesia, *Rencana Strategis: Kementrian Agama Tahun 2020-2024*, Jakarta: 2020.

Dialogue among adherents of Abrahamic religions in Indonesia only involves Islam, Christianity and Catholicism, and does not yet involve Judaism because there are not a lot of Jews and Jewish communities in Indonesia. Religious leaders of Hinduism and Buddhism, as well as Confucianism, are always included. Within the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, the directorates are as follows: Directorate General of Islamic Community Guidance, Directorate General of Christian Community Guidance, Directorate General of Catholic Community Guidance, Directorate General of Hindu Community Guidance, and the Directorate General of Buddhist Community Guidance. There is no Confucianist Community Guidance and Jewish Community Guidance thus far. However, it should be promptly noted that with the development of information technology through digital media facilities, internet, Facebook, Twitter and others, tensions in the relations among adherents of various religions in the world, for instance, between followers of Hinduism and Islam in India, between adherents of Judaism and Islam in Israel and Palestine, as well as in many other places, have had a major impact on the social psychology of the religious life of Islam adherents and others around the world.

UNDERSTANDING THE ABRAHAMIC FAMILY THROUGH THE WORLD OF EDUCATION

Religious life has an immense contribution to achieving world peace: living together harmoniously, mutual respect, valuing each other, non-conflictual relationships, being amicable, greeting one another and working together. To safeguard the peace and harmony of life among the adherents of various world religions, Abrahamic religions have ethical guidelines or social morals called the Ten Commandments.[6] The Qur'an uses the term "*Kalimatun sawa' baina wa bainakum"*

6 The Ten Commandments are 1. Worship Allah only, 2. Respect one's own parents, 3. Observance of the Lord's day (Sabbath; Friday, etc.), 4. Prohibition of Idols, 5. Prohibition of Blasphemy, 6. Prohibition of Murder, 7. Prohibition of Adultery, 8. Prohibition of Theft, 9. Prohibition of Dishonesty, 10. Prohibition of Desiring Forbidden Things.

(Common Words Between Us and You), a joint pledge between us and you.[7] The Second Vatican Council in 1965 has produced a very monumental historical document in an effort to rectify the doctrinal statement of Catholicism concerning adherents of non-Catholic religions and beliefs.[8] The Amman document (Amman Message) in 2005, the 'A Common Word' document in 2007,[9] all indicate how important it is to avoid and prevent a group's fanatic behavior, *ta'assub* (bigotry), and excessive religious egoism that engenders exclusivity and closed-minded religious views amidst a way of life and human civilization that is increasingly open.

More than that, it is very crucial to raise new awareness in order for religious leaders, community leaders, socio-religious thinkers and researchers and educators to improve and perfect *methods and approaches* of religious education and learning in public and private schools, in all educational levels, be it in elementary, secondary (public, vocational, madrasas, seminaries, Islamic boarding schools), higher education and other educational institutions.

"Mutual Understanding" is the keyword. In the words of the Qur'an, Sūra Hujurāt *(49),* verse 13 says "to know each other" (*li-ta'arafuu). Inna khalaqnakum min dzakarin wa untsa, wa ja'alnakum syu'uban wa qabaila li ta'aarafu* (O mankind! We created You from a single (pair) Of a male and a female, And made you into Nations and tribes, that Ye may know

7 The Qur'an, Sūra Āl-i-'Imrān (3), verse 64. **S**ay: "O people of the Book! come to ***common terms as between us and you***: that we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not from among ourselves Lords and patrons other than God." If then they turn back say: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to God's will)." Emphasis added. Also M. Amin Abdullah, "Ketuhanan dan Kemanusiaan dalam Islam dan Kristen: Sebuah Pembahasan Alquran Pasca Dokumen ACW," in Suhadi's (Ed.), *Costly Tolerance: Tantangan Baru Dialog Muslim-Kristen di Indonesia dan Belanda* (Yogyakarta: CRCS UGM, 2018), 13-34.

8 Hans Kung, *Theology for the Third Millennium. An Ecumenical View* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 232.

9 Waleed El-Ansary dan David K. Linnan (Ed.), *Muslim and Christian Understanding: Theory and Application of "A Common Word",* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Translated into Indonesian and expanded to include authors from Indonesia, *Kata Bersama: Antara Muslim dan Kristen* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press), 2019.

each other).[10] The language for it in social humanities and religious phenomenology is *Verstehen*, where the words empathy and sympathy are its core concepts. *The Verstehen method assumes that human beings in all societies and historical circumstances experience life as meaningful, and they express these meanings in discernible patterns that can be analyzed and understood.*[11] The Verstehen method, which is commonly used in religious phenomenology, asserts that human beings in all societies wherever they may be and whatever historical situation they may be in always live, experience and enjoy life as something very valuable (whatever the religion, belief, ethnicity, class, school of thought, view of life). And they express or state the meanings they consider the most valuable in their lives in patterns that can be seen and observed, and therefore, can be analyzed and understood by others.

In the study of religions, especially religious education in a pluralistic society like Indonesia, what is needed is not to stop at the "knowing-that" point (just knowing the what, why, how and history of religions other than one's own). Religious study is different from social studies, humanities, much more so science in general. In the study of religions, religious education, and certainly Islamic education require the capacity for perceptive feelings and deeper engagement. There is a need for the engagement of insight, perceptive feelings and a sincere call from within, not only of mutual respect and appreciation, but also the ability to feel what people of different religions feel. That is what Keith Ward calls "knowing-with" (knowledge accompanied by an inner attitude, a call from within, from the deepest voice of conscience, to be willing to change and not be trapped by negative social perceptions of other people or groups who are different), and be more involved using our mental faculties and perceptive

10 The Qur'an, Sūra Hujurāt (49), verse 13. "O mankind ! We created You from a single (pair) Of a male and a female, And made you into Nations and tribes, that Ye may ***know each other*** (Not that ye may despise Each other). Verily The most honoured of you In the sight of God Is (he who is) the most Righteous of you. And God has full knowledge And is well acquainted (With all things).". Emphasis added.

11 Richard C. Martin (Ed.), *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Chicago: The University of Arizona Press, 1985), 8.

feelings to share in the experiences of others just as we ourselves feel. This is another language or term for the words empathy and sympathy.[12]

Dialogue and mutual understanding are certainly not aimed at religious conversion, that is, inviting followers of a particular religion to convert to another, nor to polemicize, debate and quarrel to find out who is wrong and who is right, to find out which is authentic and which is fake as is commonly comprehended by fanatical and egoistic religious followers, nor to argue about each other's respective faiths and beliefs, which will only generate prejudice, stereotyping and even discrimination. It is too expensive and too risky if religious beliefs are treated and used in such manner. Contemporary religious proselytizing and missions in a world that is increasingly open require refined approaches. Aside from this, although proselytizing and religious missions are still needed, the emphasis should be more on improving the quality of education both in terms of knowledge, skill, attitude as well as values, and spirituality,[13] honing competence and sensitivity to be able to respect and uphold the dignity and worth of humanity and the well-being of every religious adherent, elevating a person's standard to the dignity of *ahsan al-taqwim* (the best state of God's creation) in a manner that is in accordance with the faith, belief and religion he believes in. Religion should be a solution provider, a problem solver, not a contributor to problems or a source of disharmony and uneasiness of life in a pluralistic society.

ETHICS (MORAL CONDUCT) OVER THEOLOGY

Religious belief, whatever religion it is, is inviolable, cannot be changed and compromised in any way. However, those religious beliefs and faiths which vertically cannot be changed and compromised, using the language of the Qur'an *'lakum diinukum wa liya diin'* (For you is

12 Keith Ward, *The Case for Religion* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2004), 159-160.

13 Tian Belawati (Ed.), Majelis Pendidikan-Dewan Pendidikan Tinggi, *Infusi Inti Dasar Capaian Pendidikan (IDCP) Dalam Berbagai Rentang Pemikiran*, Jakarta, Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi, Kementrian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020.

your religion, for me is my religion), cannot be used as an excuse or a ground in horizontal-social-humanity not to understand each other's beliefs and work together to solve humanitarian problems in the life of an increasingly complex world such as the assault and hegemony of social media, most especially those related to the spread of hoaxes and fake news, poverty, ignorance, health, the covid-19 pandemic, environmental destruction, climate change, and nuclear weapons of mass destruction. The exchange of experiences and expertise on how to overcome human problems is very much needed and required by contemporary human civilization. What needs to be underscored is that the various difficulties in contemporary civilization are not only experienced by Muslims, but also felt and experienced by adherents of all world religions, without exception. Civilization and coexistence which are peaceful and harmonious (*al-ta'ayus al-silmi*) are far more valuable than fanaticism (*ta'assubiyyah*) and the narrow view of the followers of Abrahamic religions with their respective truth claims and superiority claims (*tafawwuqiyyah*), each one claiming to be greater than the other, are susceptible to being infiltrated by irresponsible groups with a vested interest and who can easily trigger social conflicts and engender policy-making that is unfair and discriminatory.[14]

Mutual understanding (*li ta'arafuu*) and rapprochement facilitated by education pathways which are of quality, seeking convergence in implementing the ethics of religions are considerably needed in the praxis of everyday life than always being overshadowed by theological doctrine or beliefs which are rigid, harsh, uncompromisable and divergent, or abstract metaphysical teachings, which do not contribute solutions to complex problems faced by pluralistic societies in the realities of everyday life.

New methods and approaches in education – not only in religious education – and inculcating life values for mutual understanding, empathy and sympathy, collaborating with the bigger family of

14 Reuven Firestone, PhD, *Who Are the Real Chosen People? The Meaning of Chosenness in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Vermont: Skylight Paths), 2008.

Abrahamic religions throughout the world and also with non-Abrahamic religions, are highly anticipated in facing contemporary human challenges. In this regard, I agree with Hans Kung and Ebrahim Moosa when they state that "each and every understanding and interpretation of religion today should be willing and prepared to be measured, tested and checked through the general rules and criteria of universal human ethics. And therefore, the understanding, cultivation and interpretation of any religion should not be exclusively on one's own, be anti-reality, should not position itself in the fringes of civilization, be unwilling and unprepared to accept input and findings from research in psychology, pedagogy, philosophy and law."[15] Systemic and synergistic interconnections between these various disciplines with the disciplines of religion and theology is a necessity of the times in an effort for mutual understanding among the bigger family of Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic religions.

These proposals and steps are parallel and in line with what I have also proposed, namely the need for a multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach to understanding world religions through education.[16] Reshaping the boundary of knowledge in the sphere of education is a necessity of the times. Former educational patterns, which are mostly monodisciplinary in nature - and in the context of religious studies or theology are generally limited only to a monoreligious and linear model – can no longer answer the challenges of the times and the increasingly complex demands of students. In today's increasingly complex relations of the world of politics, economy, social interactions, culture, art and science, what is required is to reformulate pedagogical concepts, theology of religions, and an intersubjective type of ethical religiosity or post-dogmatic religiosity.[17]

15 Hans Kung, *Op. cit*., h. 253; Ebrahim Moosa*, Revival and Reform in Islam,* Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000, h. 28.

16 M. Amin Abdullah, *Multidisiplin, Interdisiplin & Transdisiplin: Metode Studi Agama dan Studi Islam di Era Kontemporer,* Yogyakarta: IB Times, 2020.

17 M. Amin Abdullah, "Intersubjective type of religiosity: Theoretical Framework and Methodological Construction for Developing Human Sciences in Progressive Muslim

That is, the capability of a religious person, more so an educator, to bring together and incorporate within himself three modes of thought all at once. First is the subjective world of religions. Adherents of world religions are obliged to be adept at understanding their own religion correctly and completely. Second is the objective world of knowledge obtained through research, observable facts (science), and third, which is far behind in the backend of civilization, is the intersubjective world – the world of conscience (*Qalb*; heart; innermost voice of the heart) and to activate it in one's religious social life.

Without the capability to incorporate these three worlds of thought, via new and fresh methods and approaches in education as a whole, and religious education in particular, it feels like achieving "Mutual Understanding" between Muslims, Christians and Jews in the bigger family of Prophet Abraham's descendants has still quite a long way to go and previous experiences will still continue to repeat itself. These are the assignments and tasks that need to be solved by educators, researchers and scholars, ulamas, priests, pastors, rabbis, monks and theologians of world religions and religious politics of the modern era; elite leaders who can become role models and examples for the wider community.

CLOSING NOTES. MADRASAH AND ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS

How then can we enter a new world and experience in terms of Abrahamic religions under the umbrella of the Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy (LKLB, for its acronym in Indonesian) program? Since it can be ascertained that when the madrasah teachers were still in college they did not really know much and may not have been introduced to the world of religions, including Abrahamic religions. Particularly with regards to the world of Islamic education, the world of madrasah *par excellence*, all these is based on how Muslims and Islamic religious educators understand *Maqasid al-Syari'ah* (objectives of Islamic law).

Perspective", *Al-Jami'ah*, Journal of Islamic Studies, Vol. 58, no. 1 (2020). h. 63-102.

In addition to the Qur'an and al-Sunnah (the two eternal heirlooms), *Maqasid al-Syari'ah* is very popular and widely known in the world of Islamic thought and education.

As it is widely known, *Maqasid al-Syari'ah* or The Fundamental Purposes or Ultimate Values of Islamic Law are (1) Protection of religion (*hifz al-din*), (2) Protection of life (*hifz al-nafs*), (3) Protection of intellect (*hifz al-'aql*), (4) Protection of lineage (*hifz al-nasl*), and (5) Protection of wealth (*hifz al-mal*). Until now, the fundamentals of *Maqasid al-Syari'ah* since the 14th century has not changed. There are several inputs from Muslim thinkers today, that of the protection of the environment (*hifz al-bi'ah*), which, they say, should be included for the sake of human life at present considering that environmental damage can no longer be stopped and is destroying the sustainability of life in the universe in general and human life in particular.

According to Jasser Auda, the problem here is not the concept of *Maqasid al-Syari'ah*, but the way people understand and interpret it. Jasser Auda's criticism of the current understanding of ulamas and Muslims is that they are too focused on the word 'protection' and 'preservation' (*hifz*). In general, their understanding is narrow, rigid, stiff, hard and inflexible. There is lack of and no effort in the development, growth and expansion of the sphere of meaning (*tanmiyah*) and also "Rights".[18] Contemporary Muslim thinkers with their various proposed arguments and theories have been trying to develop methods of interpretation and expand the coverage of its meaning. Ibn Asyur and Jasser Auda and others have written arguments and books to expand the interpretation or meaning of the 5 points of *Maqashid al-Syari'ah*.

What is relevant in the topic of discussion regarding Abrahamic religions in the context of Religious and Cross-Cultural Literacy is the development of the meaning or definition of *hifz al-din* (protection of religion) and *hifz al-'irdh* (protection of one's self-esteem or life). This

18 Jasser Auda, *Maqasid al-Syariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law. A Systems Approach*, London-Washington, The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2008, h. 21-25

protection or preservation is not only limited to the protection or preservation of a particular religion, in this case Islam, but should be developed and expanded to include the protection and preservation of all world religions and their adherents, not excluding the Abrahamic religions, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In the same way, said protection and preservation should also apply to adherents of non-Abrahamic religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and so forth, meaning protection, preservation, safeguarding of the lives of their adherents, their places of worship, their basic rights in their social, political, economic and cultural life.

Paradigm shift through the reformation of methods and approaches in thinking that results in the expansion of the meaning and definition of *Maqasid al-Syari'ah* as described above will unlock greater horizons of thinking for Muslims and open up new ways to enter the sphere of Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy, including its intercultural relations and communication and multicultural insights which are very much needed by teachers in a diverse nation like Indonesia. To simplify it, the development of the theory or concept of *Maqasid al-Syari'ah* from classical to contemporary can be mapped graphically below:

Paradigm Shift in the Understanding of *Maqasid* from Classical to Contemporary

No.	Classical *Maqasid* Theory	Contemporary *Maqasid* Theory
1.	Protection of religion (***al-din***)	Protection, preservation, safeguard of and respecting the right to freedom of religion and beliefs of all people, whatever the religion and belief
2.	Protection of honor; protection of life (***al-'irdh***)	Protection and preservation of human dignity; protection and preservation of human rights

3.	Protection of lineage (***al-nasl***)	Protection of family. Concerned more towards the institution of family including regard for spousal rights and child rights
4.	Protection of intellect (***al-'aql***)	Multiply mindsets and scientific research; prioritizing journeys to seek and develop knowledge; avoiding attempts to underestimate the workings of the brain
5.	Protection of wealth (***al-maal***)	Prioritization of social concerns; development and growth of economy; lessening the gap between the rich and the poor

Yogyakarta, 10 August 2021

*English translations of the Qur-an texts in this document are copied from *The Holy Qur'an: Translation by A. Yusuf Ali* (Online source: https://quranyusufali.com/).

*This document has been prepared for the Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy (LKLB, for its acronym in Indonesian) program, October 2021 – June 2022

CHRISTIAN - THE PERSONAL COMPETENCY

REALITY, THEOLOGY, AND PRAXIS OF DIFFERENCE:

BUILDING CROSS-CULTURAL RELIGIOUS LITERACY COMPETENCE FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS

By Ferry Mamahit, Ph.D.

Introduction

In the present era of globalization and cultural diversity which increasingly enriches the dynamics of community life, interreligious dialogue and understanding are becoming more and more important. Specifically for Christian educators, understanding religious and cultural differences is a requisite in fulfilling their call to provide education that is inclusive and empowering (LaBarbera, 2011). In this context, the theology of difference and its practices play an important role in shaping cross-cultural religious literacy competence. This article will explore the complex realities in the socio-religious life of a society, as well as strive to understand the role of theology and practices of difference in order and in the effort to help Christian educators understand and respond to the challenges and opportunities offered by a progressively growing multi-cultural society.

Socio-Religious Reality

In *The Religious Other*, one of the editors of said book opens the discussion by arguing that people are now living in an era where religious diversity has become a fact of life (Accad & Andrews, 2020). Especially so when one is residing in a pluralistic global society. Differences, diversity and uniqueness cannot be avoided, not only in the cultural field, but also in the religious field. Here, it is emphasized that the entanglement of Christians and Muslims remains a very complex matter due to our own fears (Green, 2019). In this context, there is a certain phobia towards the Islam religion, or Muslims. How much more when we talk about the post-9/11 incident, after the collapse of the twin towers in New York City, United States, there are certain fears with regards to Muslim groups.

Even though we live in an era that is increasingly connected to one another, it seems that interreligious stereotypes and misunderstandings still remain a daunting problem for some people. They are often tempted to see people, or even their own friends from different or other religious backgrounds as enemies or strangers, without making any effort to understand them more deeply. This misunderstanding is often triggered by the perception that other religious teachings try to distort the religious teachings or attack the beliefs of others. Much of this problem can be traced to the role of social media (Vidgen & Yasseri 2020), which tends to expose news and views that are biased, causing misinformation and misunderstanding. In addition, if we look into the history of relations between Islam and Christianity, we encounter various religious, political, social and cultural tensions that run deeply, still leaving their traces until today (Kalin, 2010). Therefore, it is crucial for us to overcome these prejudices and misperceptions, seek a deeper understanding of each other, and promote constructive dialogue to strengthen interreligious relations.

In Indonesia, the reality is that, on the one hand, anyone can see that there is good intra- or interreligious cooperation between

one religion to another, but on the other hand we see differences that give rise to various complexities in relationships, complications, fears, phobias, misunderstandings, and tensions. This is the reality we currently face. Thus, there is a kind of calling within myself and Accad, and other people to try to collectively face this socio-religious reality. Similarly, this has already been a concern for Leimena Institute which has thought about this for a long time, by initiating a systematic involvement in building relations or connections among religions and now it showed, is showing and continues to show the fruits of its efforts.

In facing a reality like this, sometimes two extremes emerge that move in opposite ways, which causes a lot of tension and misunderstanding. On the one hand, there are people who take an approach that emphasizes similarities (Pratt, 2017). Usually, when someone wants to emphasize similarities, he uses the flight mode, which means that if there are differences, this person will tend to avoid them more. Rather than embrace these differences, this person will avoid them instead. In addition, in this emphasis of similarities, what is often called false calmness or quasi-peace often arises. On the surface it may look calm, but actually beneath the surface there is some kind of raging turmoil, struggle, or resistance movements. People who face this reality, when they emphasize similarities, they only want to produce uniformity and are against differences.

On the other hand, there are people who heavily emphasize differences, using an approach that is actually the opposite of those who emphasize similarities above (Pratt 2017). They use the fight mode. Because there is superiority, sometimes the forces of the majority are used to face these differences, through means of resistance, suppression, intimidation, and so on. These are people who heavily emphasize differences and distance from others. You and I are not the same and are not allowed to control each other, because one is considered more superior than the other. Such language or narrative is often used as a

mode of resistance. And so, because the emphasis is on subordination or superiority, this approach is actually resistant to or against peace. In essence, it is unlikely for a strong and superior majority to willingly yield to the minority.

The approach focusing on similarities and the other approach emphasizing differences will lead to different consequences. Those who heavily emphasize similarities tend to seek uniformity, attempting to find similarity or alikeness in understanding various matters, often with the aim of creating harmony or consistency of beliefs, even though this is oftentimes fake. On the other hand, people who strongly emphasize differences will be too exclusive because they prioritize differences in the understanding and beliefs among individuals or groups. This increasingly creates diversity that is seclusive. This approach highlights diverse understandings and can lead to intolerance toward differing views, potentially resulting in conflicts that are destructive in nature.

Polarization in behavior is a phenomenon that reflects the two extreme responses to social reality that were mentioned previously. On the one hand, there are those who emphasize similarities and try to achieve uniformity, perhaps doing this with the aim of creating harmony and cohesion in religious beliefs. On the other hand, there are those who emphasize differences that are seclusive, encouraging a closed attitude towards others. Consequently, this polarity creates complex dynamics in the socio-religious context, and raises questions about the extent to which harmony and difference can come together in a broader understanding (Ernazarov, 2021). In this context, it is necessary to consider whether there is a middle ground which makes it possible to depolarize the two extreme poles, thereby encouraging a dialogue that is more inclusive, productive and transformative in shaping a shared religious life.

If so, there are several questions that might be asked. If there is polarization or schism, is there a middle ground or can the so-called depolarization happen? What can be depolarized from those poles?

And if the middle ground is emphasized, what then is the middle ground? To answer all these questions, I would like to propose a theology of difference from a Christian perspective. Later, the existence of this middle ground will be explained. What is meant by theology of difference? Why does a Christian need to have a theology of difference? How can a theology of difference become an ethics of difference? The moral values that we obtain from said theology of difference can then be applied in our daily lives. More specifically, what is the relevance of this theology and praxis of difference for Christian teachers, who serve in Christian schools. Are there any examples of how this theology of difference has been realized concretely?

Towards a Theology of Difference

In this context, based on my experience and studies, it seems that there is a middle ground which can be taken. The polarities explained earlier can be depolarized. This is the argument being conveyed at this point. With a wise approach, one can seek solutions that reduce the tension between these two poles, ultimately promoting better dialogue and a more inclusive understanding. The first step is to learn about the "theology of difference" in order to gain a deeper understanding of the concept and meaning behind it. Through this understanding, he will be able to identify the theoretical foundations that support this approach. And then, we will see how this foundation can be applied in theological practices, creating a more solid ground for depolarization efforts.

General Terms and Concepts

The basic understanding of the word "theology" plays a key role in understanding how to do theology. The word "theology" itself comes from Greek, consisting of two words: "theos" which means God, and "logos" which refers to words, statements, studies, or knowledge (Balthasar, 2013). In other words, theology is a science that studies

about God (Grentz & Olson, 2009). Although this definition may sound somewhat exaggerated—for how could finite humans make an infinite God the object of their study—nevertheless, it reflects the essence of the word "theology" in its literal sense. This view has been present since ancient times, as expressed by a renowned church father, Augustine. He explained that theology is a rational discussion carried out in the context of respecting and glorifying God (Stainton 2008). This is interesting because it challenges the view that approaching God can only be done through subjective faith alone. He argues that aside from faith, we can also know God through rational approach and intellectual understanding.

In understanding theology, there are several sources that can be used (McFarlane, 2020). First, individuals can rely on their minds to reflect on and formulate theological concepts, relate religious teachings to the realities of everyday life, and deepen their understanding of God. Aside from reason, traditions also have an important role in doing theology, which includes teachings and practices that have developed throughout the history of Christianity. Christians can also incorporate their authentic experiences with God, such as experiences of new birth, salvation, and sanctification in doing theology. However, the main source in doing theological processes is the Bible, also known as the Holy Scriptures. The Bible consists of the Old and New Testaments, with a total of sixty-six books that serve as a guide in understanding God and Christian theology. Therefore, these sources play a role in the formation of one's theology (McFarlane, 2020).

In understanding the meaning of theology, there is another interesting approach, which is the view that theology is a kind of conversation or talk about God (Long, 2009). In this context, theology is seen as an intellectual and spiritual discourse and discussion centered on God. In any conversation or discussion that involves or relates to the concept of God or divinity, essentially, people are doing theology. This shows that doing theology can be an inclusive

and ordinary activity, making it into something that is accessible and understandable to people from various circles (Moltmann, 1999). This way, theology is not solely the domain of professional theologians, but also becomes part of our daily life in contemplating and knowing God.

Now, the second term we are learning is "difference". What is meant by difference? Maybe we can learn from the English understanding of difference, a term that refers to a situation or reality where there are two or more things which are not the same or are different. Two or more things can refer to people, objects, or concepts, those that are different from each other. In philosophy, this difference often pertains to a reality wherein an entity of existence is differentiated from other entities (Malafouris 2013), for example material forms (liquid, gas, solid), colors (red, orange, blue, etc.), or shapes (round, square, cone, etc.). Thus, it is an existence that is differentiated from other existences. Even though they exist in a relational field, for example material forms, colors, or shapes, they are different from one another in terms of entity.

The term "theology of difference" is an interactive theological concept that discusses and embraces the reality and existence of differences and diversity, without compromising one's foundational (and solid) beliefs in unity (cf. Sacks, 2000). This approach refers to a framework in which theology serves as a tool to interact with the reality of religious, belief and cultural differences, without compromising the underlying and solid beliefs held by each individual or community. The theology of difference attempts to accommodate diversity and multiplicity of views, and creates room for dialogue and deeper understanding without undermining the foundations of held beliefs. (Bennet, 2004). In an increasingly global and multicultural context, a theology of difference can be a relevant and effective approach in bridging the gap among groups of different backgrounds in society. Embracing the reality of differences can create a broader and deeper

understanding of the meaning of diversity.

In dealing with differences, we need to understand that differences do not reduce essence or personal integrity. Every individual has an identity, beliefs, and foundations that shape who they are. The presence of differences should not make a person feel threatened or burdened; on the contrary, it is a natural part of diversity that enriches the world. Humans do not need to strive to be similar to others, because it is what makes the world more diverse and interesting. Every person has the right to defend their own beliefs and opinions, and that is what makes each individual unique. Respecting differences and celebrating diversity is the best way to build an inclusive and resilient society.

Therefore, the theology of difference emerges as a Christian theological-practical approach that embraces difference and diversity in an open but critical framework. The concept of "open but cautious" becomes the key to exploring how differences can be a means for human transformation (Theron, 1999). Differences actually have great potential to change individual lives who interact with each other, as in the case of differing beliefs. When communicating and interacting with those who have different views, he does so with an open but critical attitude. This is not only about how to accept differences, but also about how to use them as opportunities to deepen understanding, broaden horizons, and enrich oneself through the exchange of different views and values (Ataman, 2008). In this way, the theology of difference teaches him to celebrate diversity as a source of learning and growth in his journey as a human being.

As we increasingly deepen our relationships with other people and begin to understand all our differences, real changes occur within ourselves. A deeper understanding of a friend's worldview and beliefs influences the way we view the world and how we behave towards people who are different. In the same way, other people who have different beliefs also experience similar changes when they interact with us intensely, openly, and critically. It is a process

of mutual transformation that occurs when a person is open to differences and strives to understand another person's perspective. This transformation not only enriches a person's thinking, but also deepens tolerance, empathy, and appreciation for diversity, resulting in deeper and more harmonious relationships among individuals who differ from each other.

For Christians, the principle "whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31) is the basic teaching of faith. In the context of the theology of differences, this principle guides a person's actions in the effort to glorify God through actions embracing differences. For example, I once lived, studied and worked together with people of different nationalities and religions at a center for religious studies and research, the Center for Muslim and Christian Studies (CMCS), Oxford, England. It is a place that specifically encourages collaboration between Muslims and Christians. This collaboration involved fellow researchers from both religions. This institution seeks to deeply understand the differences of all those within it and seeks a more in-depth understanding of each other's faith, in the hope that what is done will glorify God and encourage peace and a greater understanding among people of different religions.

Everyday life at this study center was full of interaction, collaboration, discussion and argumentation involving people of different religious beliefs. Through this intense interaction, I gradually began to understand more deeply the views and beliefs of my friends who were of a different religion. Conversely, my Muslim friends also experienced significant changes in their lives when interacting with me -- thinking together, discussing, and even oftentimes expressing differing opinions. This process created transformation, deepened our understanding of each other, and inspired positive changes in attitude, outlook, and behavior. This should be a concrete evidence that dialogue and interaction between individuals with different backgrounds can enrich experiences and bring profound changes

in our lives as well as encourage a broader and more inclusive understanding.

Finally, observing what is mentioned above, depolarization became a requisite because of the existence of relationships, collaboration, cooperation and interactive discussions that were intense. Even though initially there was a polarization in beliefs, we stood on our own respective beliefs with a solid foundation. However, behind all the differences in beliefs, we found a common ground, especially when we discussed who God is, as a figure full of mercy and grace towards all people (cf. Heck, 2009). In this process, as individuals from different backgrounds, each one could believe and adhere to the same human values together. This reflects the transformation that occured within each of us, when we used these differences to glorify God.

Biblical Bases

The underlying basis for the way Christian educators see and respond to this complex socio-religious reality is primarily based on the belief in the authority of the Bible. As Christians, the Bible is believed to be an irreplaceable source of truth (Siekawitch 2015). The Bible provides direction and a firm foundation in life, as well as providing an ethical and moral framework that guides our actions and behaviors. This belief guides us to embrace socio-religious differences with an open and loving attitude, because the Bible itself teaches the values of love, tolerance and justice. Therefore, the fundamentals of Christian faith motivate Christian teachers to understand and respond to differences with an open heart, making the Bible the primary guide in the efforts to promote interreligious dialogue, understanding and peace in a society which is becoming increasingly diverse (Lee, 2010).

In the biblical standpoint, we can clearly see the concept of diversity and difference inherent in creation (Gen. 1-2). The creation story portrays that God created the universe with all its existing diversity and differences (Löning & Zenger, 2000). God also initiated the

development of nations, starting from Adam and Eve, who later became many nations with various ethnicities, languages and cultures (Gen. 5). In the Christian view, this creation full of diversity is part of the divine design, and as humans created in God's image, we are called to respond to differences with understanding, love and respect (cf. Repstad, 2016). Through this awareness, followers of Christ are responsible for promoting unity in diversity and drawing inspiration from God's beautiful and diversified creation.

In the Bible, we find concrete examples of how God accepted and involved people other than the Israelites in His salvation plan, which we can read in the beginning of the book of Genesis, particularly from chapter three to eleven (Gen. 3-11) . Although the Bible often focuses on the story of the Israel nation, specifically in the Old Testament, God also showed His concern for foreigners. For example, we look at the case of the three strangers who came to meet Abraham (Gen. 18). Although Abraham did not know them, he graciously received them, inviting them to his house, providing food, and showing great hospitality. Through this story, the Bible provides an example of how we as humans are called to accept and include strangers, show hospitality, and open ourselves to them, along with the principles of love and hospitality inspired by faith (Schwartz, 1998).

Aside from the example of Abraham accepting strangers, the Bible also provides many other examples of God involving individuals who were not from the Israelite nation in His plan of salvation. For instance, we can refer to the figure of Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20), a king and priest from Salem, who appeared in the middle of Abraham's journey and blessed him. Melchizedek is a mysterious figure who represents those who were not among the descendants of Israel, but God still used as part of His plan. Rahab is another example (Josh. 2), a Canaanite woman who helped Israel's spies when the city of Jericho was attacked. She was also blessed and integrated into God's people. During the course of Old Testament history, we encounter many

cases wherein people not of the Israelite nation or faith were included in God's plan of salvation. This confirms the value that God places on diversity and the inclusion of all people in His universal plan for humanity.

One of the most prominent examples in the Bible which underscores the acceptance and inclusion of individuals who are not from the nation of Israel is the story of Ruth. She, a Moabite woman of non-Hebrew background, married a native Hebrew named Boaz. This story illustrates how Ruth, although a foreigner and of different origin, became an important part of the lineage leading to David and ultimately Jesus himself (Matt. 1:1-16). This is a concrete example of how foreigners, with their diverse ethnic, tribal and religious backgrounds, received a special place in God's plan of salvation. The story of Ruth emphasizes that God's love and inclusion transcends national and cultural boundaries, and that people from different backgrounds can have a very significant role in the journey of God's salvation for humanity (cf. Lau, 2011).

In the New Testament, we can observe how Jesus Christ, very clearly, interacted with individuals who were not of the Jewish nation, demonstrating the importance of salvation and inclusion for all people. Jesus faced a Roman centurion (Matt. 8:5-9), spoke with a Syrophoenician woman (Mrk. 7:24-30), and interacted with a woman from Samaria (Jhn. 4), all of whom were not Jews. The fact that these stories are contained in the Bible stresses the message that God does not look at ethnic, religious, linguistic or tribal differences (cf. Patten, 2013). This reveals that God visits and embraces all individuals who are of different backgrounds, provides the way of salvation for all, and teaches us to do the same, that is, respecting, accepting, and embracing diversity in understanding God's plan of salvation. In this matter, the Bible teaches us to treat all "foreign" (read: different) people with openness, kindness, and respect, regardless of their ethnic background, language, or beliefs (Denaux, 2012).

The New Testament underscores the reality of the church as a Christian community consisting of individuals with a variety of different gifts. The analogy of the church as a "body" (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27; Col. 1:8) in the New Testament portrays the church as a body that has many members, each with its different functions and unique gifts (Dunn, 1990). In various parts of the New Testament, we see how important the acknowledgement of diversity is in the church. This is reflected in the unity of the church which embraces the diverse talents, gifts and roles of its members. Furthermore, in the book of Revelation (7:8-9; cf. 19:1), we see an eschatological picture of a great multitude of people from various nations, tribes, and languages standing together before the divine throne. This concept of difference is the basis of the theology of difference, which emphasizes the importance of appreciating, embracing, and understanding diversity in the context of the church and in preparation or anticipation of the coming kingdom of God (Fuellenbach, 2006).

Theological Bases

The main theological basis that underlies the theology of difference is the concept of the Trinity, which describes differences in divine unity. The concept of the Trinity refers to the belief that God exists in three distinct Persons, namely God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Grudem, 1994). Although they are one in substance, in person they are different. This is the basis of the theology of difference, which shows that differences can exist in unity. The concept of the social Trinity, which refers to the idea of a Godhead three-in-one, highlights that these three individuals exist in the context of close social relations (Volf, 1998). They interact with each other socially despite being different persons. This basis forms the understanding of why the theology of difference emphasizes the importance of a "middle ground", mutual respect and embracing differences. In this concept, we can see that harmony and unity in diversity are fundamental principles

reflected in the concept of the Trinity itself.

Christ Jesus is the focal point of the theology of difference which portrays the unique union of God and man in one person. He is 100% God and 100% human. This concept identifies two different entities within Jesus, namely the divine aspect (God, Word, or logos) and the human aspect (human or anthropos) in full, which are united in the person of Christ (McGrath, 2018). This implies the existence of "two natures" in Jesus Christ. This means that Jesus is fully God and fully human. However, it should be noted that these two entities are not in conflict, but uniquely relate within the person of Jesus Christ. This concept is the basis for understanding how differences in unity can be achieved, because in Him, the differences between human nature and divine nature can unite in wholeness depicting beauty and mystery in Christian theology (Crisp, 2007).

Substantially, the understanding of humans as creations reflecting the image and likeness of God creates the basis for the recognition of inherent differences among individuals (Plantinga, 2001). Humans, as divine representations, are unique in their diversity. He is seen as a creature who not only differs from each other, but also differs from other created creatures. Existential differences indicate the diversity which underlies the nature of each individual, while differences in life experiences reflect how each individual's experiences differ from one another. This understanding shapes the philosophical-theological foundation for the theology of difference, because it acknowledges that diversity is a natural part of human creation, and that embracing differences is an integral part of the reflection of God's image and likeness in each individual. Because of this, in understanding and responding to differences, we honor the existential realities and unique experiences of each individual as part of the greater divine plan for all of creation.

Wide-ranging human differences are part of a common humanity. Embracing differences reflects high regard towards equal rights

and common human values recognized before God. However, it is important to understand that, although these values are equal in the eyes of God, humans as individuals are unique in themselves (Hollenbach, 2002). This implies that the uniqueness of humanity lies in its differences. In other words, humans do have basic similarities in being the image and likeness of God, but there are differences in their nature and life experiences as humans, and this is what makes them unique. Therefore, in understanding the theology of difference, we should acknowledge the richness inherent in human diversity, while being reminded of the similarities underlying all individuals before God. In these differences, we find the richness and value of each person within this "common humanity".

The Values of the Theology of Difference

The theology of difference has several good and noble values, which become the foundation for understanding and practice in diverse and various situations. One of the main values is reconciliation. This is important in dealing with the conflicts and tensions that often arise in the interactions among different groups. Reconciliation involves efforts to build bridges, reach mutual understanding, and resolve contradictions that arise due to differences. This value encourages individuals and communities to face differences with the determination to improve relationships and promote peace. These reconciliatory values can provide a constructive framework for responding to and resolving conflicts in the context of diversity and lead to collaborative efforts to achieve deeper understanding and more harmonious relationships among diverse groups.

The theology of difference also promotes the value of liberation which includes two important aspects. First, this theology teaches the freedom to accept differences. This means that individuals are invited to have an open mind and accept diversity in all its forms. Through this freedom, prejudice, misunderstanding, and negative preconceptions

can be overcome, allowing for the growth of understanding and tolerance. Second, the theology of difference emphasizes the freedom to maintain personal beliefs. It gives individuals the right to live out their beliefs with integrity. In this case, the "liberation" aspect reflects freedom from the constraints of narrow thinking and stereotypes that can hinder personal growth and healthy relationships with individuals of different backgrounds. Thus, the theology of difference offers a framework that respects the freedom of individuals to embrace differences while still maintaining their personal beliefs with integrity.

Aside from that, there is the value of cultivation towards human development in the theology of difference. This is reflected through the process of personal development or growth which arises when individuals engage constructively with people of different backgrounds, where there will be increased understanding, empathy and interaction skills. This idea also includes growth in relationships among individuals, since embracing differences with an open mind can strengthen bonds between individuals, promote peace, and build bridges that are far-reaching among diverse groups. Growth in understanding and regard for diversity is an integral part of this idea, because embracing differences with an open mind leads to a deeper understanding of the values of each individual and a regard for diversity as a valuable asset in society. And so, growth in the context of the theology of difference is about supporting positive developments at the individual level, between individuals, and in the understanding of diversity, which ultimately enriches the experience and quality of life together.

Consequently, change or transformation is one of the main values emphasized in the theology of difference. This plays an important role in embracing differences with an open mind. Through the process of embracing differences, individuals as well as communities can experience positive transformation in several aspects. First, there is a transformation in understanding, which involves the development

of deeper insights into differences, elimination of prejudices, and growth in the understanding of diversity. Second, there is a transformation in tolerance, which includes the increase of capacity to appreciate differences and accept diversity as richness. Third, there is a transformation in harmony, which involves active efforts to build harmonious relationships among diverse individuals and groups. Overall, the three transformative impacts above can enrich individual experiences and promote harmony between individuals of different backgrounds.

In the theology of difference, there is also a strong emphasis on values that counter supremacy and binary thinking. The concept of supremacy reflects the view that one group or individual is superior to another, which often results in closing oneself off against people perceived as weaker or less fortunate. In this context, the theology of difference rejects supremacy and encourages humility and empathy towards individuals who may not stand out in society. In addition, the rejection of binary concepts, which often categorizes all things in black-and-white or one-zero, stresses that the reality of the world is not simple. In the theology of difference, we are invited to acknowledge and embrace the complexity and diversity in the identities, beliefs and experiences of humans, and not be trapped in narrow binary thinking. Thus, the counter-supremacist and anti-binary values above encourage a person to have a more inclusive, fully empathetic, and more realistic view of human diversity and the world around us.

Finally, the theology of difference rejects polemical views. This means that conflicts and differences of opinion do not have to lead to hostility. Polemics that may arise should be recognized as part of human interaction, but emphasis is placed on how to strive for transformation and constructive conflict resolution. This becomes an opportunity for growth in understanding and better dialogue. Therefore, the theology of difference rejects hostility in all forms, because its impact can be very damaging to civilization, to relations between individuals and to

human rights. Avoiding the destruction of civilization and humanity is the primary goal of the theology of difference, and it reflects the view that conflicts can be settled through reconciliation, dialogue, and peaceful resolution, not through destruction. Thus, counter-polemics and anti-hostility values become the foundation for a more constructive approach to differences and conflicts in society and in individual lives.

Practices of Difference

After understanding the theoretical bases of the theology of difference, we will focus the discussion on more operational and practical concepts. We will discuss ways in which the principles of the theology of difference can be implemented in everyday life, specifically for Christian teachers in developing inclusive education in their respective schools. This will help them understand how theological concepts can be applied into concrete actions to respond to differences and diversity in society and in personal relationships.

In this stage, we will delve into the ethical dimensions of the theology of difference. If previously we understood the bases of this concept theoretically, now we will explore practical ways to implement it into concrete action. This will be beneficial as a practical guide for daily relationship behavior and decisions. Focusing attention on the ethical aspect, one will learn how to put the above principles such as reconciliation, freedom, growth, and transformation into action. It is an effort to embrace differences with an open attitude, to respect individuals' rights to their personal beliefs, and to contribute to positive developments in the relationships among individuals and relations within the society. In this way, there will be a shift from theoretical theology to practical theology, so that actualizing the values of the theology of difference in everyday life becomes a necessity.

In this section, we shift focus from orthodoxy, which encompasses correct beliefs, to orthopraxy, which focuses on correct actions and

practices. This change directs us to move from descriptive theoretical aspects of the theology of difference to more prescriptive elements. In this context, the concept of "prescriptive" is understood as an ethics of difference, which represents the development of competencies in terms of moral values. These competencies are then translated into daily life practices. This refers to how we translate the beliefs and theories of difference into concrete actions in everyday life. In other words, we take the views that are theoretically correct and turn them into correct practices, in the form of mutual understanding, acceptance and reconciliation with those who are different. Through all this, the theology of difference becomes a moral guide that shapes our actions in the real world.

Practical Applications

When we reflect on the practical implications of the theology of difference, we discover principles about how to be an inclusive Christian individual. This means that he can welcome or embrace differences in all their forms. In this perspective, humans are not seen as "them", "other people" or "*liyan*" (the other), but as a diverse "us", who are gathered in one shared space. This reflects a spirit of inclusivity that encourages us to remove exclusive diction or narratives that can create feelings of alienation or distance from others. Instead, we hold an embracing attitude, encouraging integration and unity amidst diversity, taking inspiration from the word "inclusive" which is rooted in the concept of "include", referring to the involvement or inclusion of all individuals in this process.

By practicing a cooperative theology of difference, social boundaries that may exist between individuals can be overcome. This concept removes distance and destroys walls of social division between one another. In this understanding, "they" turns into "we" or "us". Thus, there is no longer any division between others and ourselves; there is only us together in the same public space. This approach

will encourage active engagement among individuals and groups, where we face life together and share experiences with each other. This encourages us to be an inclusive community, one that embraces diversity and builds deep relationships with people who are different.

The theology of difference or the ethics of difference that is advocated cannot be applied effectively in a homogeneous community. For example, there is a person who, since childhood, rarely interacts with other individuals from different religious backgrounds. He only had a few opportunities to meet people of other religions in social situations. His life has been largely confined, for instance, to family, school and Christian church circles. Over the years, he has had limited exposure to differences, especially in a religious context. Later in life, this will make it difficult for him to relate to other people of different religions. For such individuals, understanding and appreciating religious differences can be a challenge. They may have limited perspectives and prejudices against people of different beliefs. This example shows the importance of bringing the theology of difference to such homogeneous communities. Therefore, providing opportunities to interact with individuals from diverse religious backgrounds and discussing the theology of difference can help reduce misunderstandings, and pave the way towards inclusivity.

When a person who grew up in a homogeneous community finds himself in a pluralistic and diverse society, he will often feel confused and uncomfortable, due to his lack of social intelligence. He may have difficulty interacting and understanding people of different backgrounds. This is a common challenge, especially when individuals are accustomed to a uniform religious background and lack the opportunities to be exposed to diversity. Therefore, it is important for a Christian to involve himself in a socio-religious environment that is more diverse, open himself to differences, and take advantage of the opportunities to learn, interact, and build relationships with individuals who have different beliefs and backgrounds. This not

only encourages inclusivity, but also develops a better understanding of the religious and social differences that exist in society.

In this increasingly plural and diverse context, active presence and interaction is needed in various heterogenous communities, even the very diverse ones, as a "breakthrough". This aims to break down the walls of division that usually exists in homogenous communities and those similar to them. The process of interaction in diverse communities opens up opportunities to better understand religious and social diversity and build connections between individuals with diverse backgrounds. Thus, individuals and communities can develop, achieve deeper understanding, and contribute to reconciliation and solving conflicts in this complex society, because how can a person consider other people as part of his life, if he only stays in a homogeneous community.

The spaces and opportunities created by the theology and ethics of difference are much broader than simply opening a space for others to enter. This includes developing spaces for discussion, sharing perspectives, engaging in dialogue, and embracing the complexities in the relationship between Islam and Christianity, as well as between diverse groups more generally. The presence of these spaces allows individuals and communities to interact more deeply, get to know each other, and jointly explore solutions to problems that may arise due to differences. It reflects a commitment to building healthy and sustainable relationships in a multicultural and diverse society.

In creating these spaces, conscious and planned efforts are required. This is an initiative that must be taken with clear intention and objectives, because communities and relationships that are inclusive and based on the ethics of difference will not materialize on its own; we must consciously make room and allocate time for this. These efforts involve the commitment and cooperation of diverse individuals and communities, to create an environment where differences are respected and conflicts are well-managed. Through these actions,

we can actualize the ethics of diversity and attain reconciliation and growth in relationships among diverse individuals and groups.

In practice, we need to prioritize Socratic-style dialogue in the context of Muslim-Christian relations. This approach refers to the principle of cooperative dialogue applied by a philosopher, Socrates, where two parties, for instance Muslims and Christians, engage in argumentative dialogue. The purpose of this dialogue is to stimulate critical thinking. This argumentative approach allows participants in the dialogue to explore complex issues in Muslim-Christian relations, which we initially showed as a relationship filled with conflict and tension that has the potential to harm civilization. Through this Socratic-style dialogue, we can overcome conflict, understand each other's perspectives, and find joint solutions that advance civilization and minimize bloodshed and discriminatory actions.

In the context of Socratic dialogue, conversations can take place in various ambiences, both serious and more laidback. The key to this type of dialogue is joint reflection and exploration of concepts. In this dialogue, we all have the opportunity to test each other's assumptions and arguments, so that we can understand the assumptions underlying the views of our peers, in this case, Muslim friends. This creates room for deep and serious evaluation and discussion, in line with the principles of Socratic-style or Socrates, pertaining to the method used in the dialogue.

Through in-depth dialogue, we can undergo a process of finding ourselves which is called self-discovery. In this process, we can better understand ourselves and our identity amidst the diversity of people with different backgrounds. In addition, we are empowered to examine and reflect on personal assumptions that we may have never questioned before. We can gain a clearer insight into other people's views and better understand their perspectives. Through dialogue, we also have the opportunity to clarify any ignorance or misunderstanding that may have formed about another person's beliefs, religion, or views.

For example, we can clarify our understanding of the religion (Islam) of our Muslim friends. Conversely, they can get direct explanations from us (Christianity) on topics that may have become contentious or controversial. In this kind of dialogue, we achieve a deeper and more open understanding, aligning our views with academic realities and more formal understanding of religion than information found on social media or unofficial sources, whose basis and theory are unclear.

The importance of spaces for discussion and dialogue in the context of applying the theology of difference is crucial. Without spaces for deep conversation and open dialogue, efforts to implement the principles of the theology of difference will be difficult to achieve. In presenting concrete applications, we need to create an environment that supports discussion and provides room for the constructive exchange of ideas among diverse individuals and communities. In this way, we enable the theology of difference to become something more than just a theory, but an applicable aspect that can help us understand, accept, and interact with the diversity of humans and the religious understandings they have.

A firm conviction is an essential element in the context of the theology of difference or ethics of difference. In interactions with differences, stability and a strong conviction in our faith and religious aspects become an especially important foundation. With firm convictions, we have a stable and sturdy frame of reference that allows us to navigate and embrace differences without the risk of being influenced or doubting our own beliefs. With a solid foundation of beliefs, we can be more open to differences, engage in constructive dialogue, and remain steadfast in our faith, so that we can respect diversity in religious beliefs without sacrificing personal beliefs.

When we encounter people with different religious beliefs, it is important to have firm convictions and an adequate literacy of information about our own beliefs. Without a strong foundation of beliefs and a deep understanding of the teachings of our religion, we may be susceptible to being influenced or doubting our beliefs when

interacting with other people who have strong convictions. The theology of difference encourages us to deepen our knowledge of our own religion and beliefs, especially, in the context of Christianity, the teachings of the Bible. This helps strengthen our beliefs so that we can engage in balanced dialogue and respect differences without compromising personal beliefs, creating a stable basis for a balanced and inclusive religious interaction.

This provides an impetus for teachers, in particular, to deepen their understanding of the fundamentals of the Christian faith. In the educational context, this includes not only knowledge of the subjects taught, but also the skills to seriously learn about religious beliefs, holy scripture, Christian reflection, and the history of Christianity. With a strong foundation of faith, teachers will be better prepared to face differences in their relationships with students and the community. With a deep understanding of their religious beliefs, teachers are then able to provide a balanced perspective and can answer their students' questions later on.

Therefore, the theology or ethics of difference requires adequate literacy about Christianity as a crucial asset. This literacy becomes a primary tool for understanding our own religious beliefs and practices in a more serious manner, and through interaction with difference, the theology of difference allows us to strengthen those beliefs. This allows us to differentiate ourselves intellectually and academically from others. And so, the goal is to become better at diversity and at affirming differences to a greater degree, while still maintaining our own beliefs. Thus, interactions with other people will strengthen our faith, and this is a practical matter that we must consider.

The Implications of the Theology of Difference for Christian Educators

An implication of the theology of difference for Christian educators is that they have a significant role as agents of the theology of

difference in educational contexts. As agents or promoters, they should be able to assume an inclusive role, communicate well about their faith convictions, have an adequate understanding of the beliefs of others, and have the ability to create transformation in the way their students view differences. As educators, they can shape a younger generation capable of embracing differences, contributing to reconciliation, and strengthening human values. In essence, Christian teachers have the responsibility to encourage a deeper understanding of faith beliefs and promote interfaith dialogue and cooperation among their students.

Interactions with other people have the potential to bring about transformation in a person's life – strengthening beliefs and changing personalities, resulting in significant personal growth. When teachers experience personal transformation through interactions with differences, they can share this change through their actions as educators. In doing so, they can influence similar transformations in the lives and thinking of their students. As agents of change, teachers play a role in shaping a generation that is able to embrace differences, promote tolerance, and encourage positive personal growth among their students.

The transformation that occurs in education starts from the key role of teachers. When teachers experience personal growth and transformation in their thinking, this paves the way for students to experience a similar transformation. The principles of education emphasize the important role of teachers in influencing students' learning experiences. Christian teachers need to strike a balance between openness to differences and careful criticism. They must open themselves to a variety of views and experiences, but also have an intellectual filter that allows them to deal with information and external influences critically. Through this balanced attitude, teachers can guide students to develop the ability to embrace differences, while maintaining the integrity of their own beliefs.

Through participation in programs such as CCRL, Christian teachers can have the opportunity to understand how to integrate the principles of the theology of difference into their teaching methods and daily interactions with their students. They can gain skills in designing curricula that stimulate critical thinking about religious differences and diversity, as well as explore ways to create learning environments that support interreligious dialogue. In this way, teachers can be more effective in educating the younger generation to become individuals who are strong in their faith, inclusive, tolerant, and able to embrace differences in an increasingly pluralistic society.

The final implication for Christian teachers is a commitment to encourage and facilitate the participation of their students in real-life experiences of interacting with differences. Teachers can initiate and support projects or extracurricular activities that allow students to be involved in interreligious dialogue, in visits to various places of worship, or in humanitarian projects involving various religious groups. In this way, teachers can help their students to not only understand the theory of difference, but also experience and practice interreligious cooperation in their daily lives, thereby reinforcing the messages of the theology of difference through concrete actions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can recognize that interacting with differences is indeed a manifestation of the power and sovereignty of God, which, at the same time, will embrace and transform differences through us. By viewing ourselves as a medium that connects God with people of different beliefs, we are invited to participate in the divine life that is always on the move and present amidst the social, cultural, and religious diversity that encompasses Indonesia. Through this approach, we as Christian teachers possess the potential to build an egalitarian and non-discriminatory perspective on diversity, and this starts with us as educators who will then influence the views

and attitudes of the students we teach, creating positive changes in society.

According to Thomas Merton (1966), a Christian thinker in the past, the beginning of love has a starting point where we grant freedom to the people we love to be themselves without attempting to change them into someone that fits our expectations. On the contrary, if we seek to change others, it indicates that we only love the reflection of ourselves that we want to see in them (Merton 1966). This highlights the difference between approaches that create polarization and misunderstandings with the approach we discussed earlier, which is to initiate depolarization and deeper understanding. By giving other people the freedom to be themselves, we promote true love as well as more positive and inclusive relationships.

References

Accad, M. & Andrews, J. (2020). *The Religious Other: A Biblical Understanding of Islam, the Qur'an and Muhammad*. Carlisle: Langhan.

Ataman, K. (2008). *Understanding Other Religions: Al-Biruni's and Gadamer' Fusion of Horizons*. Vol. 19. Washington, DC: CRVP.

Bennett, M. (2004). "Becoming Interculturally Competent" in Wurzel J, ed., *Toward Multiculturalism: A Reader in Multicultural Education*, 2nd ed., 62-77. Newton: Intercultural Resources Corporation.

Crisp, O. (2007). *Divinity and humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Denaux, A. (2012). "Stranger on Earth and Divine Guest: Human and Divine Hospitality in the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts" in Gest, J. van and E. van der Borght, eds., *Strangers and Pilgrims on Earth*, 85-100. Leiden: Brill.

Dunn, J (1990). "Unity and Diversity in the Church: A New Testament Perspective." *Gregorianum* 17, no. 4: 629-656.

Ernazarov, O. (2021). "Harmony and Differences between Religious Studies and Religious Education." *InterConf* 42: 415-419.

Fuellenbach, J. (2006. *The Kingdom of God: The Message of Jesus Today*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006.

Green, T. (2019). *The Fear of Islam: An Introduction to Islamophobia in the West*. Minneapolis: Fortress.

Grenz, S. & Olson R. (2009). *Who Needs Theology? An Invitation to the Sstudy of God*. Downers Gorve: InterVarsity.

Heck, P. (2009). *Common Ground: Islam, Christianity, and Religious Pluralism*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Hollenbach, D. (2002). *The Common Good and Christian Ethics*. Vol. 22. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kalin, I. (2010). "Islam, Christianity, the Enlightenment: 'A Common Word' and Muslim-Christian Relations" in M*uslim and Christian Understanding: Theory and Application of "A Common Word,"* 41-56. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

LaBarbera, R. (2011). "Transforming Teaching in Inclusive Settings: An Educator Looks at VIM." *International Christian Community of Teacher Educators Journal* 6, no. 2: 1-9.

Lau, P. (2011). *Identity and Ethics in the Book of Ruth: A Social Identity Approach*. Berlin-New York: De Gruyter.

Lee, H. (2010). "Building a Community of Shalom: What the Bible Says about Multicultural Education." *International Christian Community of Teacher Educators Journal* 5, no. 2:1-12.

Long, D. (2009). *Speaking of God: Theology, Language and Truth*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Löning, K. K and Zenger, E. (2000). *To Begin with, God Created: Biblical Theologies of Creation*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press.

Malafouris, L. (2013). *How Things Shape the Mind*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

McFarlane, G. (2020). *A Model for Evangelical Theology: Integrating Scripture, Tradition, Reason, Experience, and Community*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

McGrath, A. (2018). *Theology: The Basic Readings*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2018.

Merton, T. (1966). *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*. New York: Doubleday.

Moltmann, J. (1999). "What is a Theologian?" *Irish Theological Quarterly* 64, no. 2: 189-198.

Patten, M (2013). "Multicultural Dimensions of the Bible." *Evangelical Quarterly: An International Review of Bible and Theology* 85, no. 3: 195-210.

Plantinga, A. (2013). "When Faith and Reason Clash: Evolution and the Bible" in Pennock, R., ed., I*ntelligent Design Creationism and Its Critics: Philosophical, Theological, and Scientific Perspectives*, 113-145. Boston: MIT Press.

Pratt, D. (2017). *Religion and Extremism: Rejecting Diversity*. London: Bloomsbury.

Schwartz, G. (1998). "God and the stranger." *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 20, no. 1: 33-48.

Siekawitch, L. (2015). *The Uniqueness of the Bible: How to Help Jews, Muslims, Mormons, and Catholics Discover God's Ultimate Source of Truth*. Bloomington, IN: Westbow.

Stainton, T. (2008). "Reason, Grace and Charity: Augustine and the Impact of Church Doctrine on the Construction of Intellectual Disability." *Disability &*

Society 23, no. 5: 485-496.

Theron, P. (1999). "The Church as Paroikia and 'Higher Critical' Theological Training" in *Church and Ministry*, 53-70. Leiden: Brill.

Vidgen, B., & Yasseri, T. (2020). "Detecting Weak and Strong Islamophobic Hate Speech on Social Media." *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 17, no. 1: 66-78.

Volf, M. (1998). ""The Trinity is our Social Program": The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement." *Modern theology* 14, no. 3: 403-423.

_____ (2011). *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos.

Von Balthasar, H. *Theo-logic: Theological Logical Theory*. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2013.

RESOURCE PERSON PROFILE

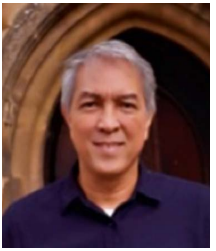
Alwi Shihab (Senior Fellow, Leimena Institute)

Dr. Alwi Shihab is Senior Fellow at the Leimena Institute. He was the President's Special Envoy for the Middle East and the OIC in 2015-2019 and the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1999-2001. Together with the then chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama, KH Abdurrahman Wahid, he founded the National Awakening Party. A staunch advocate of interfaith dialogue, he has served on directors at Hartford Seminary and the Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions.

Amin Abdullah (Professor of Philosophy, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta)

Prof. Dr. M. Amin Abdullah is Senior Fellow at Leimena Institute and Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University in Yogyakarta. As the Rector in 2002-2010, he successfully led the transformation of Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic Religion Institute to become a full-fledged university. He is also the Cultural Commission's Chairman of the Indonesian Academy of Sciences (AIPI). His writings have brought the attention to a multi-disciplinary approach to understanding Islam and the Qur'an that is more open to diversity and modernity. His books, for example Islamic Studies in Higher Education (2006) and Multidisciplinary, Interdisciplinary, and Transdisciplinary: Methods of Religious Studies and Islamic Studies in Contemporary Era (2020), have received enthusiastic responses from scholars in education and Islamic studies in Indonesia and other countries. He served as Vice President of Muhammadiyah in 2000-2005 and Chairman of Muhammadiyah's Fatwa and Islamic Research Council in 1995-2000. He received his doctoral degree in philosophy from Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey.

Ferry Yefta Mamahit, Ph.D.



Ferry Yefta Mamahit, Ph.D. lecturer at STT Southeast Asia Bible Seminary. He has an interest in struggling with Islamic-Christian relations in Indonesia. He is active in the Center for Muslim-Christian Studies and has been a Research Associate at Oxford University since January 2022. He holds an M.Div. from Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, Philippines, an M.Th. from SAAT College of Theology, Indonesia, and a Ph.D. from the University of Pretoria, South Africa.

PART 3

THE COMPARATIVE COMPETENCY

THE COMPARATIVE COMPETENCY: UNDERSTANDING MY FAITH AS I DO

By Chris Seiple

Cross-cultural religious literacy asks that you understand your neighbor's faith as s/he does. This chapter is but one Christian's perspective on his own faith, and what that means for society, the state, and citizenship.

It is not a chapter on theology. It is a chapter on my beliefs, and how they shape my understanding of governance and responsible citizenship.

As you read, I would encourage, maybe even challenge, you to think about how you would express your beliefs and what they mean for your behavior, what they mean for your understanding of good governance—of a good society, and a good state, that respects and protects all citizens.

*****

By way of reminder, cross-cultural religious literacy is about you, the other, and what you do together. Our world's challenges demand partnerships. Good, even sustainable, partnerships result from engaging those with whom we will have to partner, individuals and institutions who have different beliefs, and behaviors, than you do.

The key, however, begins with you. How do you understand your own beliefs, and what they teach you about engaging the other (a personal competency)? Do you have the patience and perseverance to listen to understand how your neighbor understands his/her beliefs, and their application (a comparative competency)? And do you know how to work on our common challenges with people and partners different from you (a collaborative competency)?

Along the way there are skills that help you engage—skills of evaluation, negotiation, and communication, applied internally and externally—that help you cross toward one another, so that you can work together, across the dignity of deep difference. Combined, these competencies and skills are cross-cultural religious literacy (CCRL).

Also, a reminder of CCRL is not. CCRL is not syncretism. We are not saying that all faiths are the same, with different names. For example, the sons and daughters of Abraham—the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims—will *never* agree about nature and purpose of Jesus.

CCRL is not illiteracy, nor is not fluency. I will never be fluent in my neighbor's faith or culture, but I can ask enough questions to not be illiterate, to show respect. In other words, CCRL is humility. It is a posture of L.O.V.E., because CCRL asks that we Listen and Observe with our hearts, Verify with our heads, and Engage with our hands.

Put differently, the comparative competency asks: What does it mean for my neighbor to live his/her faith, in his/her specific cultural context? The answer to this question begs its own question: can I accept my neighbor's understanding of his/her own beliefs and behavior, even if it is contrary to my previous understanding, and/or to what social media tells me his/her faith is?

*****

What is Christianity? While there is much theology and discussion, the essence of my faith can be summarized in one question: Do I believe that the tomb is empty?

What do I mean by that?

Well, there's a story that Jesus was crucified on a cross, and he was buried. Christians believe, however, that he rose from the dead. We call this day Easter.

If I don't believe in this miracle, then there's no point in being a Christian.

If, however, I do believe that Jesus rose from the dead, then I have to come to terms with two key issues. First, He must have been who He said He was. And He said He was the son of God, fully human and fully divine. Only God could defeat death.

Second, I must understand the implications of death's defeat. In many human traditions, death is the consequence for wrongdoing. If Jesus came back to life—because He defeated death—then He took the punishment for all of humanity's wrong-doing.

Specifically, I do not have to suffer the consequence of my own wrong-doing. And if I do not have to die for wrong-doing, then that means that I can live forever because of the sacrifice Jesus made, because He loved all of us so much that He was willing to die for our eternal life, if we believe in Him.

In short, if the tomb is empty, then death is but the doorway to the rest of, eternal, life...with Jesus.

Why do Christians believe this story? Well, we believe that there were eyewitness accounts of the empty tomb, and of Jesus himself...after He had been crucified.

One testimony is from Matthew, a disciple of Jesus. Matthew tells us that while the male followers of Jesus were still hiding, scared that they too might be crucified, two female followers of Christ came to the tomb and discovered it empty. (In Jewish law—and remember, Jesus and all of His followers were Jewish—there had to be two eyewitnesses if a story was to be admissible in a court of law.) They also discovered an angel, who told them that Jesus had risen.

So that's the essence of why Christians believe. But there is one more

responsibility. If Christians believes that Jesus was the son of God, that He defeated death and that He is the way to eternal life, then we have to follow His commands.

And what are His commands? Jesus told His disciples, as consistent with all the prophets of the Old Testament, that there are two commands: love God, and love neighbor (to include enemies).

Put differently, the two commands are the cross itself: Loving God is the vertical, and loving neighbor is the horizontal—their intersection is the cross, where death was defeated. If I love God, then I will love my neighbor. And by loving my neighbor, I love God.

Much theology has developed around these points over the past 2000+ years since Jesus walked on the earth as a man. I can gain eternal life if I choose to follow Him, and obey His commands.

But He leaves me that choice.

*****

If the above is how one Christian understands the basic tenets of his faith, what about the practical application? Let me share a little bit about how I've learned to apply my faith in my own context.

I grew up in "New England," in the Northeast corner of the United States. This is my homeland, my tribe. During the 17th century, some Christians in England decided they wanted to worship in a different manner than the Church of England, which they regarded as too much like Catholicism. These people were called "puritans," and were a minority of the total population. The majority faith tradition (the Church of England) harassed and/or persecuted the puritans. As a result, many left "Old England," crossing the dangerous North Atlantic Ocean in small ships, to start a "New England" on the North American continent.

But the puritans did not seem to learn from their previous experience. When they arrived in Massachusetts, they told everyone how to worship. In other words, they didn't like people telling them how to worship, so they left "old" England; but once free in "New England," they

nevertheless treated others the same old way that they had been treated.

> Massachusetts became, essentially, a soft theocracy. Humans being human, though, not all appreciated being told how to worship. In fact, one of the puritans in their midst kept challenging the theocracy, telling them that "forced worship stinks in the nostrils of God."
>
> His name was Roger Williams.

Not surprisingly, the rulers of Massachusetts did not like this Roger Williams. They decided to banish him back to old England, where he likely would have been executed. And, not surprisingly, Williams did not like this idea. So he fled Massachusetts.

He was a white, protestant man of the same theology as the white, protestants rulers of Massachusetts. He simply believed differently regarding its impact on society, and its governance (the state).

He fled West to his friends, the Native Americans, where, obviously, he was now a minority. These Indians took him in because he had been in a prior relationship with them. He had learned their language to show respect (and share his faith), and he was against the colonialism that gave away their land without asking them. Williams paid them for some land, establishing a place where all people could exercise what he called "liberty of conscience"—which he thought was the greatest gift from God. He called his town Providence because he believed God had provided him with this opportunity.

He did all of these things because he had a different interpretation of theology than the rulers of Massachusetts. Jesus commanded him to love all his neighbors, not just those who looked and believed like him.

Williams thought that respecting and protecting one's neighbor was not only the right thing to do, but that it was good governance, resulting in more civility, and thus more stability. In other words, because he had experienced repression himself, Williams believed that when the state or society places legal or social restriction on people because of their beliefs—if they are prevented from practicing the essence of their identity—then it is more likely that they will become angry or even rebel against the state.

He best expressed the governance implications of his theological beliefs—to love God and love neighbor, as Jesus commands, because Williams believed Jesus to have defeated death as the son of God—through the analogy of a trip across the Northern Atlantic.

In the below quote, Williams talks about different people and different beliefs on one ship. The ship was full with mostly, Protestants, who were English. There were always other travelers, including Catholics, Muslims, and Jews. But they all had a common goal. They wanted to go to the new world, to a New England, to have a better life. Roger Williams writes:

> "It has fallen sometimes that both [Catholics] and Protestants, Jews and [Muslims] may be embarked on one ship. Upon which supposal I do affirm, that all the liberty of conscience that ever I pleaded for turns upon these two hinges, that none of the [Catholics], Protestants, Jews, or [Muslims] be forced to come to the ship's prayers or worship, nor secondly, [be] compelled from their own particular prayers or worship, if they practice any. I further add, that I never denied that notwithstanding this liberty, the commander of the ship ought to command the ship's course, yea, and also to command that justice, peace, and sobriety be kept and practiced, both among the seamen and the passengers."[1]

Roger Williams is saying that there must be rules from the top-down if the ship is to make safe passage. The ship is the state, and the captain is the president. But there also must be relationships among the passengers, who respect and protect the other's liberty of conscience, even if he or she believes differently from the majority.

If these relationships can be nurtured in this manner, then the non-majorities—the Catholics, Jews, and Muslims in this example—are more likely to contribute to the well-being of all passengers (according to the commands of their own faith), and they are more likely to be loyal to the mission of the ship of state.

---

1 Roger Williams, January 1655, letter to the city of Providence. As quoted in James Calvin Davis, ed., *On Religious Liberty: Selections from the Works of Roger Williams*, (Harvard University Press, 2008), 278-9.

In today's language, Roger Williams was saying that the everyone has a spiritual citizenship, which must be respected and protected. He was also saying that everyone has a global citizenship—everyone on that ship was from a different place, but they were all seeking a better life on the other side of the planet. Therefore, it was all the more important to live out the best of their faiths on that ship, in order to live it out around the world, if there was to be civility and stability in the governance of a multi-ethnic and multi-faith society.

But these spiritual and global citizenships have to be lived out somewhere, in a particular place, that has and expects certain behavior according to the rules and relationships of both the state and society. So Williams is also making the case for a national citizenship, a place where all can find their story in the story of the country; precisely because that country allows them to live out the best of their faith, and thus contributing to the common good of all.[2]

*****

So, with that let me conclude about how I, one person from America, understands Christianity; and, how my beliefs shape my understanding of what the relationship between society and the state should be, thus enabling each of us to engage the dignity of deep difference. My only recommendation is that you continue to have these kinds of conversations about what you belief and why, as well as the implications for how you and your neighbors, together, live in society, and for how you and your neighbors, together, think about its governance.

*This document has been prepared for the Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy (LKLB, for its acronym in Indonesian) program, October 2021 – June 2022

2 For more on Roger Williams, please see this article that I wrote ten years ago: "The Essence of Exceptionalism: Roger Williams and the Birth of Religious Freedom in America." Chris Seiple (2012) THE ESSENCE OF EXCEPTIONALISM: ROGER WILLIAMS AND THE BIRTH OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN AMERICA, The Review of Faith & International Affairs, 10:2, 13-19, DOI: 10.1080/15570274.2012.683252.

THE COMPARATIVE COMPETENCY:
KNOWING CHRISTIANITY

Pdt. Dr. Henriette Hutabarat Lebang, M.A.

Through this opportunity, I will introduce Christianity in a broad outline. To introduce it in detail would obviously take quite a long time. In particular, I will focus on the Christian view regarding relations with people from different backgrounds, among other things differences in culture, ethnicity and religion.

The Core of Jesus' Teachings: Genuine Love

Christianity is centered on the teachings of Jesus, which is genuine love. Jesus said, *"'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:37-40)*

Love for God is love in its entirety, done with all the heart, with all the soul, with all the mind. In other words, love that is undivided. It can happen that someone says he loves God but does not do God's will, and instead puts his own desires first, or prioritizes what this world considers important, even commits things that are forbidden by God. Jesus said: *"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate*

the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." (Matthew 6:24) Love is centered only on God, who first loved human beings and all of His creation. It is impossible for humans to profess to love God, but at the same time consider worldly things such as wealth as important or even deify such wordly things. Love for God in its entirety, this is the law which, in Christianity, is considered the greatest commandment.

And the second commandment that is as important as the first is *"Love your neighbor as yourself."* This love for fellow human beings is not love that is limited, or love that is feigned. This love is love that is genuine, whole, without ulterior motives and extended to all people, regardless of ethnic background, culture, religion, or gender. Actions driven by genuine love do not treat others differently.

To love one's neighbor is love in its entirety; 'as yourself', Jesus commanded. Usually we love ourselves more than we love others, or we tend to love members of our family, people of the same ethnic group or religion as us more than those outside our primordial group. But Jesus mandated: *"Love your neighbor as yourself."* In the Gospel of Matthew 7:12, Jesus reminded His disciples: *"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you."* This is an example of how to love one's neighbor as oneself. So before we speak or do something, we need to reflect, what if these words were conveyed to me or these actions were done to me: would it be pleasant or not? The measure of each of our deed and speech are whether those actions or words reflect our genuine love for God and for fellow human beings, without limits, without restrictions, without pretensions, without any burden or without ulterior motives such as, 'I love so that others will love me, too.'

These two primary laws: love for God and love for neighbor cannot be separated. Love for God must be demonstrated through acts of love for others, as explained in the Bible: *"Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has*

given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister." (1 John 4:20-21)

Jesus even advised His disciples to love not only those whom they love or those who love them in return, but to love their enemies, too, and pray for them.

Love Your Enemy

Jesus said: "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (Matthew 5:43-45)

A common belief or practice in Jesus' time was: love your neighbor and hate your enemy. This kind of belief continues to be the prevailing view of people even up to now. Loving fellow human beings, yes. But our enemy? Wait a minute. Isn't it not unusual for a lot of people to assume that an enemy should be hated, even fought with until he is black and blue and even until he dies? Unfortunately, those considered as enemies nowadays are not only those who oppose us physically or harm us, but also those who do not hold the same opinion as us or those who have a different background be it their ethnic, cultural and religious background. It is not surprising that it is not unusual for us to have a negative attitude towards people who are different from us.

Jesus said to His disciples or followers, *"you have heard that it was said"*. Jesus was referring to the belief or practice at the time that it was natural for one to only love fellow human beings, fellow friends, people of the same ethnicity or those whom we are acquainted. This kind of attitude assumes it is not wrong if we hate our enemy. However, Jesus said, "*But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you*" (Matthew 5:44), not only to

love your enemies, but also to pray for those who persecute you. Pray for those who may have spoken ill of you, pray for those who may have been hostile to you with the hope that God will enlighten their hearts, so that there will be peace, and so that you can relate as brothers and sisters. Jesus advised His followers to love and greet not only those they are already acquainted or their friends, but to love and greet everyone without differentiating.

Even though our backgrounds are different, our cultures are different, our languages are different, our religions are different. And particularly if someone hates you, do not hate that person. Do not counter hate with hate. But instead hate should be countered with love. Why so? Jesus said, "...*that you may be children of your Father in heaven.*" What it means is that you become children of God, your Father in heaven, who is all-loving, who causes the sun to rise on the bad and the good. God does not discriminate. The sun still shines on everyone, on the good and the bad. And God causes rain to fall on the righteous and the unrighteous. This means that God's mercy is always available, bestowed to everyone. It does not matter whether they do good or evil.

The question is, how do humans respond to the said mercy of God? Is it by giving thanks, by doing the things that God requires as written in the law of love, or vice versa? Loving the Lord your God with all your heart means not worshiping other gods. These other gods point to an object of worship that differs from God's will. In the course of human life, material things or power often become the new god. It is not uncommon for human beings to compete in an unhealthy manner with fellow human beings, legitimize ways which are not authorized by God in order to obtain wealth or power that they assumes can make them happy. Love for God and neighbor is put aside. Human beings even do not hesitate to knock down or kill fellow human beings in order to obtain wealth, power or position. Here, human beings no longer prioritize the commandment to love God and to love their neighbors.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, meaning that God's mercy granted to us should be used according to His will, which is loving our neighbors, caring for our environment, caring for all creation for the benefit of all, so that God's peace can be attained in this world.

God is good to all people and full of mercy to all of His creation. In the Book of Psalms it is said:

> *"The Lord is gracious and compassionate,*
> *slow to anger and rich in love.*
> *The Lord is good to all;*
> *he has compassion on all he has made.*
> *All your works praise you, Lord;*
> *your faithful people extol you."* (Psalm 145: 8-10)

Christians believe that God is good to all people and full of mercy to all of His creation. Therefore, love for others should be realized without limits. For what reason? Because the Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. God is good to all and He has compassion on all He has made. The human response to God's infinite love is gratitude which is manifested in a disposition that cares for others and cares for His creation. Everyone who loves God will praise God in his life. And praise God not only with his voice, but also with his mind, with his deeds, with speech that pleases God and in accordance to God's command in the law of love.

Jesus Breaks Down Man-Made Barriers

In our lives now and also at the time of Jesus, there were many man-made barriers that separated one human being from another or one group from the other. People from different ethnic groups, different backgrounds, different religions do not often greet each other. Oftentimes they are enemies, and this enmity is passed on to the next

generation. One example in the Bible is that of the Samaritans and the Jews.

Jesus had a Jewish background. At that time it was forbidden for Jews to associate with Samaritans. The enmity lasted across generations. Each one of them avoids meeting people whom they consider as enemies, more so in public places. In the eyes of the Jews, Samaritans were considered lowly, so much so that at the time the Samaritans were hostile to the Jews. The Jews regarded the Samaritans as not of pure Jewish descent. Their religious background is different; their place of worship is different (Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim).

Once, on His journey, Jesus met a Samaritan woman at a well (John 4:1-42). Jesus asked for water from the Samaritan woman who came to fetch water at a well known as Jacob's well, at noontime. This Samaritan woman was astonished as to why a Jewish man would ask water from a Samaritan woman like her. This woman was instantly aware of the barriers that existed between them: differences in ethnic background, religion and gender. At the time women were considered inferior to men. In addition, this Samaritan woman was judged as violating morals, so she was regarded as a sinner.

However, Jesus instead greeted the woman, and even held a very in-depth discussion with her – by Jacob's well, a public place. Anyone can come to that place. There were many basic matters that Jesus talked about with the Samaritan woman. This was indeed a taboo in the time of Jesus. However, with His attitude, Jesus broke down man-made barriers. Jesus followed the command of an all-loving God, who did not differentiate people based on their background.

God Does Not Differentiate People

One of the stories in the Bible, which is the meeting of Peter with Cornelius, shows that God does not differentiate people based on whatever consideration there is. The Apostle Peter was one of Jesus' disciples who was also of Jewish background. He met Cornelius, one

of the officers of the Roman army. He was not a Jew. This Cornelius was a devout, God-fearing man, who was diligent in giving alms to the Jews, and diligent in praying to God. His religion was not mentioned. It is told in the Bible (Acts 10:1-42) that Cornelius and Peter each had a vision; in both of their visions, Allah designed their meeting, because due to their different backgrounds, they inherited an unfriendly view towards people of different ethnic backgrounds.

In the religious tradition of the Jews at the time, it was forbidden for a Jew to enter the house of a Gentile. Jews tend to look down on people of non-Jewish background and regard them as unclean. However, in the divine vision revealed to Peter, God opened Peter's eyes after he heard a voice saying: *"Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."* (Acts 10:15) Cornelius also had a vision telling him to send his servants to fetch Peter who was in another city. When Cornelius' messengers arrived at the house where Peter was staying, and conveyed Cornelius' message to bring them back for a meeting with Cornelius, Peter struggled. How could he as a Jew enter and become a guest at the house of Cornelius, a Gentile? But God made Peter realize that all people are equal before God.

When Peter arrived, Cornelius along with his relatives and close friends welcomed him warmly. Peter said to those present: *"You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"* (Acts 10:28-29) This experience led Peter to a confession of faith, saying: *"I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all."* (Acts 10:34-36) 'Fear the Lord' means to do or practice His commandments: love, truth, justice, peace.

In short, Christians, or followers of Christ, acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord of all people. Therefore every Christian should

treat each person as a fellow brother, whatever the differences that exist between them, just as Christ had exemplified.

Jesus also exemplified how to love, and not to stay away from people who are regarded as sinners. Luke 19:1-10 tells the story of Jesus' meeting with Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector who wanted to meet Him. In those days, tax collectors, who were assigned by the Roman government to collect taxes from the people, often demanded more than what the government had determined. Because of this, tax collectors were hated by the Jewish community at the time, were regarded as sinners, and considered unclean. When there was news that Jesus would enter the city of Jericho, Zacchaeus wanted so much to meet Jesus. Because he was short, he had to climb up a sycamore-fig tree in order to see Jesus who was about to pass by. Zacchaeus was surprised when he saw Jesus directing His eyes on the tree where he was, and heard His voice: *"Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."* Then Zacchaeus immediately came down and greeted Jesus with joy. But all who saw this grumbled and criticized Jesus, because He was regarded as staying in a sinner's house. But Jesus said, *"Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham."*

The children of Abraham are entitled to the promise of salvation from God. Jesus emphasized that He came into the world to seek and save sinners. (Luke 19:10) Those were the new breakthroughs that Jesus had done, that sinners who wanted to seek God will be received by God. Because of his encounter with Jesus, Zacchaeus then repented, renewed his life, and no longer practiced corruption. He said: *"Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."* (Luke 19:8)

Understanding The Faith of Christians

Christians or adherents of Christianity are followers of Christ. They believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of this world and

are commited to imitating Jesus and carrying out His teachings in their daily lives. Jesus taught the values of **love** to all people without differentiating, declaring **truth, justice and peace** to all people and even to all of His creation.

Therefore, in the Christian faith's understanding, the church is not primarily the building, but the church is the people. The fellowship of Christians who gather to worship and share and carry out Christ's commands in the midst of the world is called a church. This corrects the understanding all this time that the church is the building. These Christians or churches understand 3 (three) vocations, namely: **fellowship, witness, and service**.

In FELLOWSHIP, the congregation gathers, unites their hearts to worship God together, both in church buildings or in the congregations' homes. In the worship service, they praise God, confess their sins, hear and meditate on God's Word, pray intercessory prayers for God's guidance so that the congregation can live according to God's word, as well as for the nation and state so that the common good of society will be realized. At the end of the service, they receive God's blessings and are commissioned to go back into their daily lives to do God's will. Through worship, Christians deepen their relationship with God, so that they can understand God's Word or His will more and more, and are empowered by the power of the Holy Spirit to do His will in their daily lives, both in the midst of family or in the society.

WITNESS means the congregation demonstrates God's great love for mankind and to all beings, and perform deeds in accordance with the will of God, which concerns the salvation and well-being of all His creation. Thus, Christians in their lives should reflect the saving love of God, and manifest that love both to fellow human beings and to all of God's creation. This is what is called the Gospel message. The Gospel is good news, the news of salvation from God that must be preached to this world, to all beings. (Mark 16:15) The good news of

the Gospel concerns the salvation of man and all creation. Salvation from God is salvation that is comprehensive, not only the salvation of the soul in the afterlife, but also the well-being of life while in this world. That is why Christians are aware that their calling is to be present in the world to witness the love of God, to bring the light of Christ to places of darkness, to be the salt of the earth that gives good flavor to the world, to prevent decay in society and to nurture the continuity of a life that is meaningful while they are still given the chance to live in the midst of this world.

Jesus taught the "Our Father's Prayer" that is recited by his followers, and among other things, it pleads with God: *"...your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."* (Matthew 6:10) Christians pray that God's will be done not only in heaven but also on earth at this present time. In this prayer, it is hoped that the salvation of God, the well-being that is from God is brought to fruition in this world so that human beings and all of God's creation experience salvation that comes from God. As its implication, followers of Christ should manifest the infinite love of God, the love of God that forgives those who do wrong or sin, through their thoughts, words and actions that imitate Christ. In this way, the peace of God Allah or *shalom* (in Hebrew) or *salam* (in Indonesian) can be truly enjoyed by all.

About SERVING. Jesus exemplified how to perform service that is sincere. Jesus discerned Himself, as: someone who *'did not come to be served, but to serve'*. (Mark 10:45) Jesus even gave His life to be a ransom for many people. Jesus said: *"Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all."* (Mark 10:43-44) Jesus, the Teacher, teaches a way of life that is different from the values of this world. He washed the feet of His disciples. (John 13:12-17) Teachers should understand their duties as servants and not demand to be served. Leaders are also advised to become servants to the people they lead and not to follow worldly ways, where leaders often exercise their power harshly and act arbitrarily.

Christians are also asked to be of service to God's creation. It is a mandate to manage, care for and preserve God's creation (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15; Psalm 8). Serving in the midst of this world also means striving to establish truth, justice and peace in society. Helping those who are hungry, sick, the widows and orphans, those who suffer or are hit by disasters; setting free those who are in chains, proclaiming that the year of the Lord's favor has come. (Luke 4:19)

The call for the church or Christians to be involved in ecological social service is also the moral responsibility of the members of the church as citizens of the country in fighting for the ideals of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, which is to achieve a just, prosperous, and peaceful Indonesian society. To achieve this responsibility, the church develops its cooperation with the government, society and all people of religion and belief.

Christians are certain of the word and promise of God: *"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! ...For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore."* (Psalm 133: 1,3) Because of this, what we need to strengthen is *tali silaturahmi* ('the cord of friendship') with fellow citizens of our country, regardless of background, so that the glory of God will reside in our country, an atmosphere where: *"Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. The Lord will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest."* (Psalm 85: 10-12)

This paper was composed for and presented in the Madrasah Teachers' Capacity-Building International Program for Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy (LKLB, for its acronym in Indonesian).

* English Translations of the Bible verses are copied from the *New International Version* (Online source: https://www.biblegateway.com/)

* This document has been prepared for the Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy (LKLB, for its acronym in Indonesian) program, October 2021 – June 2022

THE COMPARATIVE COMPETENCY:

WHAT IS JUDAISM?

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO JEWISH BELIEFS, PEOPLEHOOD, AND PRACTICE

Authors: Rabbi David Rosen, Rabbi David Saperstein, and Dr. Ari Gordon

Introduction

Judaism is one of the oldest world religions, and it is also one of the least understood. Unfortunately, ignorance and misinformation about the religious "other" often leads to baseless hatred among God's children. We know that Jews and other non-Muslims should learn about Islam to become better partners in humanity based on shared values. Likewise, it is important for Muslims and other non-Jews to learn about what Judaism teaches, how Jews tell their own story as a people and how they practice their religion. Knowledge of other faith traditions makes us better citizens of an ever-shrinking world and can even deepen our commitment to our own faiths and practice.

The Holy Qur'an teaches that the diversity of humanity is a sign of God's greatness (Surat al-Rum 30:22). Likewise, Jewish tradition also affirms the sacred value of human diversity. The Talmud—the collection of oral traditions of ancient Jewish sages—records the following teaching about why God created humanity from a single

person (and not myriads of people at once):

> Humanity was created from a single person, to teach that one who destroys one soul of a human being, is considered by sacred Scripture to have destroyed a whole world, and one who saves one soul is considered to have saved a whole world. And also [humans were created from one person] to promote peace among God's creatures, so that one should not say: My ancestors were greater than yours … and [humanity began with one person] also to proclaim the glory of the Holy One, blessed be He. For a human being stamps many coins with one stamp, and all of them are alike; but the King of the kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, stamps each person with the stamp of Adam the First, and nevertheless not one of them is like the other. (*Sanhedrin* 37a)

The message in this story is that every human being is of infinite worth, that all people share an equally venerated ancestry, and that our human difference is a tribute to the beauty of creation and the majesty of our creator.

If diversity is part of God's plan and a sign of Divinity, then when we develop cross-cultural religious literacy, not only are we learning to navigate a multicultural world, but we are also deepening our relationship with God. We see this essay as a tool to learn about Judaism on its own terms, to help Muslims audiences deepen appreciation of their own faith, and to engage in the sacred task of honoring the diversity of God's creation.

No single writing can capture the entirety of Judaism, Jewish community and Jewish experience, but this introduction offers a first entry point into the question "What is Judaism?" by highlighting three key elements of what it means to be a Jew: faith, peoplehood and practice.

Judaism as a Faith Tradition

At the heart of Judaism lies the affirmation that this world is not an accident, or a ship without a captain. It is the creation of a God,

who is not only all-Wise and Omnipresent, but it is also the world established by a moral God. Jews believe that God's qualities of divine compassion, mercy, justice, righteousness, and loving kindness all shape God's relationship with the world that we know.

The Place of Human Beings

God placed humans at the summit of creation, both as divine servants and as caretakers for the world. Judaism teaches that human beings were endowed with a special aspect, referred to in the Hebrew Bible, the Torah, as the divine image or *Tzelem Elohim* (Genesis 1:26-27). Of course, God doesn't have a material image and therefore the phrase in the Torah is a poetic metaphor, which indicates that humans have something of a spiritual nature that the rest of creation does not have. This is understood to be the human soul, or what many of the Torah's commentators understood in terms of our intellectual capacities. But regardless of how one understands the metaphor precisely, it means that humanity has a special responsibility in this world.

Jews believe that human beings have been given a special capacity to distinguish between right and wrong, between good and bad. But Jews also understand that a key distinction between human beings and God is that humans are limited in our intellectual and spiritual knowledge. Therefore, the important second principle that Judaism affirms, is that God has shown us, through prophetic revelation, the knowledge of God's ways and will.

Revelation and Law

For Judaism the climax of revelation occurs at Mount Sinai, where God reveals through Moses, to the children of Israel, the covenant with the Jewish people that also records the Jewish way of life, that we call the Torah.

Jews use the term Torah to refer to many things, including all of the Hebrew Bible or the entirety of Jewish tradition. However,

the word Torah, or *tawrat* in Arabic, most often refers to the five books of Moses. The Greek name for that set of scriptures is the "Pentateuch."

According to ancient Jewish tradition the Torah contains 613 commandments, or in Hebrew *mitzvot*, from which all of Jewish practice stems. So, for example, there are commandments that have to do with what we can and cannot eat, those that mandate charity, those outlining the holidays, and many on how we treat one another. Many of these commandments are not relevant today. For example, since the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, called Bayt HaMiqdash in Hebrew, the laws connected to sacrificial offerings, the Temple priests and ritual purity within the Temple are no longer in practice. The commandment that Jews who are able to do so make pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times each year was also only in effect while the Holy Temple stood in Jerusalem.

Likewise, there are commandments which are contingent on circumstances. For example, there is a commandment for the appropriate procedure for divorce. Divorce is not an ideal situation, and we prefer people to have happiness in their marriage. However, Judaism recognizes that sometimes marriages break down, and if a marital bond must be dissolved there is a commandment and set of procedures as to how divorce should take place. Many commandments are situational in this way.

Judaism also teaches that beyond the actions we take, we must lead our lives with consciousness of the Divine. For example, we must be aware of God's presence in every aspect of our life, both personal and in our relationships with others. Our actions should reflect that metaphorical "Divine Image" with which we were created. We must carry gratitude to God for the gift of life and the blessings we receive. We must commit to belief in the one God and develop both love and fear of God. Many Jews strive to develop the experience of joy as part of their service of God.

Jewish tradition does describe the idea of 613 commandments, but many of the details are not outlined in the Torah. For example, in the ten commandments that were first revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai, there is the commandment to "keep the sabbath day holy" (Exodus 20:8). What does that mean? How does one keep a day holy? This is just one example of many of where the language of the Torah itself is very concise.

Therefore, Jewish tradition teaches that together with the divine revelation of a written Torah, an oral Torah also developed—a tradition of interpretation transmitted through word of mouth by reliable transmitters—which enables us to expound the text and to understand how it applies to different situations. The mode of interpretation that relies on tradition is like *tafsir* within Islamic tradition.

The oral tradition—which some Jews believe was also revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai—was communicated by word of mouth from one generation to the next. However, new circumstances arise, technologies develop, the world becomes increasingly complex world, more teaching and more information emerges. Eventually there became a need to compile the oral traditions into canonical collections.

The first stage of oral traditions that commented on the written text of the Torah were compiled in a collection called the *Mishnah*, approximately in the year 200. The *Mishnah* is divided into six areas of Jewish law and contains 63 volumes, each addressing one specific topic. The six divisions cover 1) prayers, daily worship, and agriculture, 2) sabbath and holidays 3) marriage/divorce and family law, 4) finances, torts, and legal procedure, 5) the Holy Temple and its practice, and 6) purity. Several topics that do not fit neatly into any of these categories—such as ethical teachings—are also included in one or another of the divisions.

The next layer of oral teachings is known as the *Gemara*, which expounds upon the text of the *Mishnah*. Together the *Mishnah*

and *Gemara* constitute the canon of Jewish tradition known as the Talmud. The Talmud was compiled around the year 500, and it includes a wide range of teachings. Most of them pertain to Jewish law, but the Talmud also contains philosophy, ethics, and narrative expansions of the stories recorded in the Torah.

> Another major feature of the Talmud is that it records the debates between the great Jewish sages on many topics. For example, the first passage in the Talmud goes as follows:
>
> When in the evening should one recite the obligatory *Shema* prayer? The view of Rabbi Eliezer was that one may recite from the time the priests of the Holy Temple used to eat their agricultural gifts, until the end of their first watch. The majority view of the sages was that one may recite it until midnight. Rabbi Gamliel taught that one has until the break of dawn to recite the *Shema* prayer. (Berakhot 2a)

The prayer known as *shema*, is a Jewish affirmation of God's unity, much like the *shahada*, and Jewish law teaches that one must recite this prayer twice each day, once during the daytime and once in the evening. However, as you see, several views are recorded on exactly when one might be able to recite this prayer. So it is with almost every area of Jewish law—the Talmud teaches the predominant opinions of the Rabbis of ancient times. These volumes were left to the Jewish scholars afterwards as a repository of teachings to use as they guided their communities on how to live in accordance with God's will on a daily basis, weekly basis, annual basis, according to changing circumstances.

Beginning in the Middle Ages, Jewish scholars also developed extensive codes of Jewish law, which did not record the many opinions of debate, but taught the ways of practice according to that sage. One of the greatest scholars of Jewish history, Maimonides (1138-1204 CE), compiled such a code which is still referenced by

Jewish jurists and teachers to this day. Likewise, when issues arose in the lives of Jews they would ask questions of their rabbis, and they would respond according to their best understanding of the situation and how the law applies to that circumstance. In this sense, the rabbis were like the *ulama* who mastered the tradition and like the *mufti* who issued legal rulings when there were questions that arose.

The system of Jewish law and the way of practice is referred to in Hebrew as *halacha*. *Halacha* is the Jewish equivalent of *sharia*, and both words mean path, the way that one walks according to God's will.

Free will, Sin, and Reward & Punishment

The next important Jewish belief is the principle of reward and punishment. Judaism rejects nihilism and believe that our actions have consequences. The idea that bad things happen when we do bad things, and the good things result from doing good things is also predicated on the belief that all human beings have free will. Human beings can choose how we act.

The belief in free will alongside reward and punishment also relates to the condition of our soul. Judaism teaches that the divine element within us, our soul, is not material, and therefore when our physical bodies die, the soul continues. When we leave this world, our soul lives the result of how we have led our lives in this world.

We are all flawed and so we can make mistakes. Judaism teaches a very important principle in the concept of *teshuva*, repentance, (or *tawbah* in Arabic) which comes from the Hebrew word *lashuv*, to return. It suggests that we are all basically good as God's creatures as his children, and our natural desire is to be close to God. However, because to be human also entails frailty, we make mistakes, we stray from the proper path. But within us is the capacity to return to God. And therefore, God, who is abundant in mercy and forgiveness will accept us back when we repent.

Judaism and the World

So, what does Judaism teach about the mission of the Jews in the world? The Children of Israel, the Jewish people, understood that the revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai, placed upon it a special responsibility. Not by any inherent virtue within the people but simply because of God's mystery and of his faithfulness to the covenant that he made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – the patriarchs, that the Jewish people was to model God's word in their practice. The Hebrew Bible portrays Jews in the Holy Land striving to create a society that could serve as a paradigm. As with all human societies, there were successes and failures. The voice of the prophets often criticized the practice of the kings and of the people, and when the people were punished, even to the point of exile from the land, the prophets also offered comfort that God's covenant with the Jews was not broken and that God's love for them endured.

Judaism does teach the concept of a messiah, who will usher in an era of universal peace, when all nations would live in tranquility, and no one will experience persecution. In the traditional Jewish messianic vision, all would recognize the presence of God in the world and seek to live according to the moral principles that flow from that recognition.

Judaism was born in a pagan world, where most peoples did not recognize the one Creator, the moral guide of the universe. However, other religions came to be, as well. While every religion has an exclusivist tradition that rejects the teachings of other faiths, Judaism also carries inclusive and pluralistic voices that honor the shared values of the various faiths. For example, in the Middle Ages great scholars like Maimonides taught that Jesus of Nazareth and the prophet Muhammad (peace upon him), were messengers who brought about universal truths that are also to be found within the Torah. And therefore, through this message a new world could be brought for everybody, where everyone would learn to live out of a sense of God's presence in the world and how they should treat one another. That is the fullness of the Jewish messianic idea.

Jews as a People

Jews do not define themselves only as a faith tradition, but also as a collective. Judaism as a religion is born out of a people's historical experience, and as a people, its identity also flows from the unique religious experience of Jews. So, one of the first elements to understanding the idea of Jewish peoplehood is to understand Jewish history.

Origins and Early History

Judaism emerged over three thousand years ago, and its formative years were alongside some of the great civilizations of the area known as the Near East: the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Egyptians, many others.

What kinds of societies were they? Were they religions? Each one had their own religious cultures. Were they nations? Each one had a national identity. Were they ethnic peoples? Many of them had ethnic identities, as well. Did they have their own culture? Each developed their own music, art, and literature.

The same is true for the Jews—they are a people that developed with a religion, a sense of nationality, an ethnic identity, and a unique set of cultures. However, the Jewish people have maintained an unbroken tradition and continuous collective identity. From Abraham to the Exodus from Pharaoh's oppression in Egypt; from the establishment of kingdoms in the Holy Land to exile after the destruction of the Holy Temple in 70 CE; from the Middle Ages and up to today, Jews tell a continuous story of a people in history.

Often Jewish communities existed both in Israel and among the populations of the world. Sometimes they exercised sovereignty in Israel and thrived within Israel alongside other populations, and at other times they were forced into exile, conquered by other peoples. Over the centuries Jews spread across the globe, living alongside many different cultures and in many different regions.

After Christianity and Islam were established, and Jews lived under Christian and Muslim rule, they tended to do better under Muslim rule. These societies often showed greater tolerance and provided more freedoms, even as the Dhimmi status was sometimes used to subjugate Jews to abusive treatment, as during the times of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mutawakkil. While Jews were oppressed by some Muslim dynasties, such as the Almohads, for the most part they did not face the kind of ongoing persecution that Jews faced in other areas around the globe. Much of the Jewish intellectual, cultural and literary traditions developed alongside Muslim communities engaged in the same pursuits.

Demographics

It is important to remember, however, just what a small part of the global population Jews constitute. Of the nearly 8 billion people living on the planet, Jews are roughly 15 million in 2022. About 90% of all Jews live in two countries, the United States and Israel, with the next largest communities in France, the UK, Canada, Argentina, Russia, and Australia.

The small size of the Jewish people also gives perspective to the horrific events of the Holocaust, the attempt by the Nazis to systematically annihilate all the Jews of Europe during World War II. In the year 1939, Jews made up 17 million people across the world. By 1945, the Nazis and their allies destroyed six million Jewish lives—1.5 million of them Jewish children—simply for being born into the wrong race and religion. In addition, the Nazis targeted and killed millions of others for their political, sexual, racial, and other identities. The Holocaust destroyed half of the Jews in Europe and wiped out a third of all Jews in the world. Many Jews living today are children, grandchildren and great grandchildren of people who survived this tragedy.

Despite the size of the Jewish people, Jews have made an extraordinary positive impact on the history of humankind. The

ideas that emanated from the Bible were embraced and shaped by Christianity and Islam and taken to populations across the globe. These other traditions that see the Jewish experience as a part of their own narrative have spread the idea of a God who calls us to ethical and righteous behavior and who desires universal peace among peoples.

In Modern times, Jews have been major contributors in the world of science, humanitarian causes, social justice, art, politics, business, and other fields. The Nobel prize winners offer an excellent example: Jews make up 0.2 percent of the global population, and yet they make up twenty-two percent of those who won prizes in the sciences and the arts and in establishing peace. Jews are not the only religious group that contributes to collective human flourishing, but our tradition of education and the values of caring for all of humanity make "giving back" a part of Jewish culture.

Diversity

So, who are the 15 million Jews who live across the globe today?

Religiously, we might think about two kinds of Jews. Most Jews throughout history were amongst those who believed that the written Torah and its oral traditions came as the direct word of God. In more recent times since the so-called European "Age of Reason" and scientific critical thinking applied to every field, including religion, other streams of Jewish belief emerged. Many of these understood our sacred texts differently, believing that they did not emerge as a direct divine message, but that they were written by men (and sometimes women), striving to understand what God called us to do. There is much theological debate about these topics, but most Jews define themselves falls into one of those two categories.

Amongst those who believe that our sacred texts are of divine origin see the commandments, the *mitzvot* (for more see above) of those books as binding obligations upon Jews throughout eternity. Most Jews who believe in this traditional view fall into the category

of what we call today "Orthodox Jews." Orthodox Jews believe they live in accordance with the same laws as Jews have always practiced, although with adaptions with changing circumstances over the centuries. In most of the countries of the world, Orthodox Judaism remains the dominate religious expression of Judaism.

Among the groups that have found a different way to approach Jewish texts and law in the last 200 years are those who allow for greater use of independent reasoning when interpreting tradition. The group known as "Conservative Judaism" for example, also believes the Bible is of divine origin, but they believe God gave greater flexibility to change the laws to meet the needs of the people. "Reform" and "Reconstructionist" Jews believe that in each era men and women using our God given wisdom and sense of ethics and culture must ensure that Judaism is in keeping with the wisdom and culture of the times.

Over the course of history Jews lived in different parts of the world, and each setting left a cultural imprint on those communities. Those whose tradition came from European origin are known as *Ashkenazi* Jews, and their practices developed in conversation with European culture. Those whose historic roots are in Spain and the Mediterranean European basin are known as *Sephardi* Jews, and their practice follows the Spanish Jewish tradition of centuries past. Jews whose communities lived in Arab lands for millennia are called *Mizrahi* Jews. In each setting, distinct cultural expressions emerged, even as the basic practices and beliefs of Judaism remained unified.

So, Jews define themselves in a variety of ways, by religion, by culture and by ethnicity. But the Jewish sense of peoplehood also leads some to define along nationalistic lines, by their connection to their historical homeland, Israel. While the Jewish story and Jewish religion was always connected to the Holy Land, in Modern times the rise of nationalisms and the nation state encouraged some Jews to form their own nationalist movement, which came to be known as Zionism.

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 was important for Jews around the world, even as it regretfully created conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Tragically that conflict remains unresolved until this day, and Palestinian people do not have a sovereign state. The conflict, however, is a political conflict between Israel and the Palestinians; it is not a religious conflict between the Muslim world and the Jewish world or between Islam and Judaism.

Unity Amidst Diversity

The robust diversity found among the Jewish people is a product of 3000 years of historical experience in various settings and contexts. What Jews share, however, is belief in the one God, the belief that our sacred texts should guide us in creating a better world, responsibility for the broader Jewish family, and a spiritual attachment to the historic homeland of the Jewish people.

The Talmud shares a beautiful teaching on the guiding principles of the Jewish people in the world as follows:

> Simon the Righteous was among the remnants of the Men of the Great Assembly and he used to say: the world stands on three things: *Torah* (study), *avodah* (worship), *gemilut hasadim* (acts of loving kindness). (*Mishnah Avot* 1:2)

Those are the three rubrics of life. Torah, or Jewish study, is central to who we are as a people. Avodah, or Jewish worship, is a foundation of Jewish religious life. But so is the idea of acts of love and kindness, *gemilut hasadim*, the idea that we must be tools of God to bring greater social justice to the world for the good of all humanity.

Judaism as a Way of Life

Jews have a system of beliefs and a sense of peoplehood, but Judaism is also a way of life, a system of practice that governs how Jews make

meaning and bring God's holiness (*kedushah* in Hebrew) into our lived experiences.

The central unit with which Jews understand what God expects of them in terms of practice is called a "*mitzvah*," a Hebrew word which means commandment (*mitzvot* in the plural). Tradition teaches that there are 613 commandments, and Jews organize them in several ways. In books of practical law, they are often organized by topic—prayer, holidays, food laws, family law, business law, etc. For those books that list the commandments, they are often thought of as those things one must do, such as caring for the orphan and widow, and those things one must avoid doing, such as stealing or idol worship. However, Jews also think of their commandments as divided between *mitzvot* that are *bayn adam l'makom,* between a person and God, and those that are *bayn adam l'havero*, between people.

The idea of these last two types of obligations flows out of the very idea of God's creation. That God created the world means that there are things that one owes to God. That all humans are God's creation means that we have sacred obligations to one another as well.

Since Judaism places an emphasis on practice, there are Jewish practices for nearly every area of life, including at major lifecycle events, throughout the course of a year, and in every single day.

Lifecycle Events

From birth to death, Judaism has special rituals that accompany each stage of a person's life. While many of the basic practices are shared by all Jews—such as burying the dead or circumcision of Jewish males at 8 days after birth (provided they are healthy)—some of the specific ways of celebrating events vary among Jews by cultural background.

Consider, for example, the Hebrew names that Jews give to their children shortly after birth. Ashkenazi Jews (European cultural background) often name children to honor the memory of someone who has passed away, and so they do not give a child the same name

as a living relative. On the other hand, Mizrahi Jews (those of Middle Eastern background) see the naming of a child after a living relative as an honor to that person, and they do so often. Mourning practices are another example. All Jews practice a special period of mourning after a close relative is buried, which involves sitting low to the floor in one place and receiving visitors who offer comfort. Traditional Jews will observe this custom for seven days, while many in the more liberal streams of Judaism observe for only three days, and some Jews choose to observe only for one day.

A short essay like this cannot capture the entirety of Jewish practice in all its details and diversity, but for nearly every occasion in the life of a person, there is a Jewish practice to mark it.

When a Jewish baby is born, they receive a Hebrew name, and male children are circumcised, as just mentioned. Births and naming ceremonies are often an occasion for celebration with one's family and Jewish community, either in the home or synagogue. As a child grows, most Jewish families educate their children to celebrate Jewish holidays, to study Jewish tradition, and to learn some of the Hebrew language.

Jews mark the entrance into adulthood for Jewish children at age 12 for Jewish girls and at age 13 for Jewish boys. The occasion is called a *bat mitzvah* (for girls) or *bar mitzvah* (for boys) and celebrates their commitment to practice the ways of the Torah and to fulfill its expectations, the *mitzvot*. For many Jewish children the celebration includes reciting a portion of the Torah in synagogue, leading community prayers, teaching the community about a part of the Torah, and a festive celebration with family, friends, and community.

When Jews get married, they sanctify the relationship with special practices of Jewish marriage. These often include saying special blessings under a canopy (*huppah)*, the signing of a marriage contract (*ketubah*), the giving of a ring, a period of seclusion for the couple and the celebration over a festive meal. If a marriage needs to end in divorce, there is an official document that is drawn up to dissolve the relationship.

Jews do not seek out converts and do not believe that all people should become Jews. However, if someone wished to enter the covenant of Judaism, there are practices for conversion. Judaism has many special practices, and so people seeking to convert usually spend at least one year of formal study of Judaism and observation of the practices of a Jewish community. The conversion ceremony involves a formal acceptance of the Torah's expectations before a group of rabbis, purification in a ritual bath called a *mikvah*, and for male converts, ritual circumcision. The Torah and Jewish tradition teach that Jews are to treat the convert to Judaism with special care and affection so that they do not feel alienated in any way.

Likewise, when a Jewish person dies, there are prescribed practices for burial and for mourning. The close relatives of someone who has died come together with community for days of intense mourning where they sit low to the ground in torn clothing and receive comforting visitors. This is followed by 30 days of other mourning practices and a year of special prayers to remember the dead. Every year, Jews have special prayers for close relatives who have died on the anniversary of their death and on major Jewish holidays. Many will also light a candle on those occasions to signify that the soul lives on even after the body has died. Traditional Judaism also teaches that all souls will be resurrected by God at the end of days.

Holidays

Like Islam, Judaism operates on a lunar calendar, and each of the twelve Jewish months begins with the new moon. The first day of each month is a minor Jewish holiday with special prayers, and there is hardly a month in the Jewish liturgical year that does not have a special day of celebration or fasting. Unlike Islam, however, the Jewish calendar has an added month approximately every 3 years to ensure that the Jewish calendar is roughly aligned with the solar calendar. This is because in the Torah, the major Jewish holidays are connected to the seasons and

the agricultural cycle of the Holy Land.

So, for eight days each spring, Jews celebrate the holiday of Passover (*pesach* in Hebrew), which commemorates the Exodus from Pharaoh's Egypt. Jews participate in a Passover *seder*, a ritualized retelling of God's saving the Children of Israel from slavery with a special text and using specific foods. For example, Jews use bitter herbs to commemorate the bitterness of slavery; they dip a fresh vegetable into salt water to symbolize both the rebirth experienced in the Exodus and each year at springtime, but also the tears of the oppressed; and a simple flat bread cooked very quickly called *matzah*, that symbolizes both the subjugation of slavery, and also the speed with which the Children of Israel were taken from Egypt. In the times when the Holy Temple of Jerusalem was standing there was a special sacrifice of a lamb made be each family on Passover, and it was to be shared so that every person was able to eat and celebrate together. Today, Passover is also a holiday of welcoming strangers into one's home, connecting with family and community, and ensuring that everyone has food to eat.

And so it is with each season. At the beginning of the summer, the harvest season, Jews celebrate the holiday of *shavuot* which commemorates the date of the revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai. In the fall, at the planting season, comes *sukkot*, when Jews leave their homes to eat in special temporary booths with leafy roofs to remember the protection that God gave the Children of Israel in the desert.

The Jew New Year, *rosh hashana*, is a time when Jews believe God judges the world and sets its course for the year ahead. They celebrate with prayers, with charity and with self-reflection and repentance for shortcomings. Shortly after the Jewish New Year comes the Day of Atonement, *yom Kippur,* when Jews request forgiveness from God through prayer, fasting and abstaining from other enjoyable behaviors.

All of these holidays are described in the Torah even if the specific details of how they are practiced come in later texts of the oral tradition. However, Jews also celebrate several holidays that arose in post-Biblical

times. For example, several Jewish days of fasting occur at different times in the year as an act of mourning the events around the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Another spring holiday, called *purim*, remembers the story of the Jewish people living in the ancient Persian empire were saved from destruction at the hands of the figure Haman as described in the Book of Esther. It is a day of joy, in which many people dress in costumes, bring gifts of food to their neighbors, and ensure that all the poor have money for food. Likewise, in the winter, another holiday called *hanukkah* extends for eight days each winter to remember the victory of the Jews over the Seleucid Greek occupiers of ancient Jerusalem and the rededication of the Holy Temple. Jews light candles for eight days and recite special prayers as part of the holiday.

So, the Jewish year is filled with days of celebration and also more somber days of remembrance. However, Jews also celebrate a special holy day each week, *shabbat*, which extends from Friday evening through Saturday night. *Shabbat* is a day to rest from our productive working lives to recognize God as creator. The Torah tells us that after creating the world in six days God rested, symbolically, to signify the end of creation. Traditional Jewish law lays out extensive restrictions on activities as a way of ritually "resting" on the day. These include cooking food, turning on lights, writing, handling money, and many other activities. Other Jews find their own way to rest even if they do not observe all of the restrictions. However, Jews who celebrate *shabbat* light candles at its beginning with special prayers and a candle at its end with another prayer. They have festive meals with family and recite special prayers for the *sabbath* and read from the Torah in synagogue.

Daily Practice

Jewish practice does not only happen at major life cycle events or at special times of year. Whether it is the special blessings—recited by many traditional Jews—each morning thanking God for the

blessings of a new day or the prayers recited before bedtime, there are rituals and customs with which Jews can infuse every single day with holiness.

For example, formal Jewish prayers takes place three times each day, in the morning, afternoon and evening. Many Jews will pray in a quorum of ten people and at a synagogue and others do so in the privacy of their own home. As with any religious group, there are also Jews who choose not to pray and do not attend synagogue regularly. Each morning Jews who pray will put on *tefillin*, a ritual object made of leather that contains certain passages of the Torah and which one wraps around ones are and places on one's head. For the morning prayers, Jews also wear a square prayer shawl with specially tied strings on each corner, called a *tallit*.

Outside of prayer, many Jews also observe a form of dietary practice known as *kashrut*, eating only food that are *kosher*. Like the practice of *halal*, there are certain animals one may eat and others one may not eat; for animals one may eat ritual slaughter is required. While both Jews and Muslims do not eat pig products, many of the requirements of *kosher* and *halal* are different. For example, *kashrut* demands that Jews not eat dairy and meat/poultry products in the same dish or at the same meal. Jews keeping *kosher* do not eat shrimp, lobster or other shellfish. The laws of *kosher* are very many, but the basic idea of dietary religious practice is shared by Jews and Muslims.

Traditional Jewish law also speaks to how a person should interact with other people in their daily lives. Jews are encouraged to do acts of piety, whether in the form of giving charity (*tzedakah*), visiting the sick, or assisting those in need. Jews are forbidden from acting unethically in business or from taking interest on loans. There are even laws about how Jews speak, forbidding the telling of lies or spreading gossip. Jews are human, and so just like other peoples, not everyone lives up to these standards all the time. However, the Jewish religion encourages people to treat others the same way they wish to be treated.

Conclusion

Judaism teaches that diversity is the will of God. That many nations and many cultures were created as part of the manifestation of divine glory. The Holy Quran also affirms this idea, when it says, "oh humankind we have made you from a single couple into peoples and nations so that you may know one another, (*Lita'arafu*)" (*Surat Al-Hujurat* 49:13). When people of the world do not know one another, we often come to all kinds of misunderstandings and prejudices about the "other," and that can lead to hate and conflict. Conversely, when people are educated about each other's traditions, they not only honor God's diverse creation, but they also dispel stereotypes and promote peace. The biblical Book of Proverbs describes the way that most Jews see the Torah and Judaism, that "Her ways are the ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Proverbs 3:17)

*This document has been prepared for the Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy (LKLB, for its acronym in Indonesian) program, October 2021 – June 2022

RESOURCE PERSON PROFILE

Chris Seiple (Senior Research Fellow, University of Washington)

Dr. Chris Seiple is Senior Research Fellow for Comparative Religion at the University of Washington's Jackson School of International Studies, where he first developed Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy. He is also the Principal Advisor to the Templeton Religion Trust and President Emeritus of the Institute for Global Engagement. He is widely known and sought after for his decades of experience and expertise regarding issues at the intersection of geopolitics, US foreign policy, Asia, conflict resolution, human rights and religion. He is a co-editor of the forthcoming Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism, and Global Engagement. Follow Chris Seiple on Twitter: @cseiple

Henriette T. Hutabarat Lebang (Chair of the Advisory Council, Communion of Churches in Indonesia)

Rev. Dr. Henriette T. Hutabarat-Lebang is Chair of the Advisory Council for the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) for 2019-2024, where previously she was General Chair in 2014-2019. She is also a Member of the National Education Standards Agency in 2019-2021, and General Chair of the Indonesian Bible Institute for 2021-2023. Previously, she was Secretary General at the Christian Conference of Asia, being the first woman to chair the institution. She is also a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and a member of the Senior Advisory Council on the Indonesia-US Council on Religion and Pluralism founded by USINDO. She holds a Master of Arts and Doctor of Education degree from the Presbyterian School of Christian Education, United States of America.

Ari Gordon (Director of Muslim-Jewish Relations, American Jewish Committee)

Dr. Ari Gordon is Director of Muslim-Jewish Relations for the American Jewish Committee, where he builds partnerships with Jews and Muslims around the world to enable them to work together on issues of mutual concern and promote civilized relations on issues where there is a difference. His work is based on the premise that good Muslim-Jewish relations will help both communities and strengthen the world.

David Rosen (International Director for Interfaith Relations, American Jewish Committee)

Rabbi David Rosen, KSG, CBE, former Chief Rabbi of Ireland, is the International Director for Interfaith Relations of the American Jewish Committee. He is a member of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel's Commission for Interreligious Dialogue; and served on the Council of the Religious Institutions of the Holy Land. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the King Abdullah International Center for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID).

David Saperstein (Former United States Ambassador for International Religious Freedom)

Rabbi David Saperstein was the former United States Ambassador for International Religious Freedom under President Obama and a member of the Muslim-Jewish Advisory Council on the American Jewish Committee. He is also Director Emeritus of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. Named by Newsweek magazine as America's most influential rabbi, for decades he led the Center, representing the largest segment of America's Jews in relations with Congress and the United States Government. The former President of the World Union for Progressive Judaism is also a member of the Steering Committee of the Alliance of Virtue which was founded by Sheikh Abdallah Bin Bayyah on the basis of the shared values of the Abrahamic religions.

PART 4

THE COLLABORATIVE COMPETENCY

THE COLLABORATIVE COMPETENCY: CCRL

By Chris Seiple

The collaborative competency is about partnership and leadership in a complicated and complex context—such that the process and product of your project is positive.

I will illustrate this competency with a case study from Vietnam. In hearing this story you might think, "Well, I could never do that!"

Yes, you can! How do I know? Because you do it every day—in your relationships with your family, friends, professional colleagues, etc. The relational principles are exactly the same. If you are going to get something done in this world, you will have to be in partnership, even relationship, with people who do not believe or act as you do.

*****

Before we consider Vietnam, let's remind ourselves of the world we live in. Our global challenges are so big, so complex—from the environment to extremism— that they require all of us to respond. There is no government or no non-governmental organization that can solve these kinds of issues alone. So, it's not a question of if but when you partner with somebody who believes differently than you do.

So how do you do the partnership? How does one cross toward the other individual and/or institution? How do you lead?

The key is engagement. Every engagement has common principles. But every engagement is different, according to that specific context, and the relevant (potential) partners. Which is to also say that every engagement requires preparation. You have a responsibility—to your moral beliefs, to your religious beliefs, to your job, to your country, and to our world—to be prepared. You have to evaluate the context, to include the people and the players, and how you might negotiate and communicate with them.

This process is also known as leadership. It is best done with a posture of humility & honor, patience & perseverance, compassion & courage. As noted in the introductory chapter, Listen and Observe with your heart, Verify with your mind, and Engage with your hands. This kind of L.O.V.E. is a leadership that seeks to get the questions right while never sacrificing one's own moral beliefs. In so doing, dignity is given to the other, as mutual respect is built.

There is you, the other, and what you do together.

*****

From 2006 to 2021, the Institute for Global Engagement (IGE), which I led from 2003 to 2015, worked with different elements of the national and provincial government(s) of Vietnam to train over 4600 people from government, religious communities, and civil society in issues related to the role of religion, and religious freedom, in society and the state, security and citizenship.

If you look closely, however, it is an unlikely alliance, that is, the Vietnamese government working with IGE. On the one hand, the Vietnamese government is just that, a government that is large, complex and bureaucratic, as all governments are. Its workers are officially Communist and therefore atheist (although many worship Buddha and/or their ancestors). And, Vietnam had fought a war with America.

On the other hand, the Institute for Global Engagement was a non-governmental organization (NGO), of 10-15 people. It was not bureaucratic. Its employees, however, were Christian, according to the founding principles of IGE.

In 2005, I met with a man named Mr. Thuy. He worked for the government, from the top-down. I worked for an NGO, from the bottom-up. He was Vietnamese. I was American. He was from the Kinh people. I was of German-Danish descent. He had family members killed by American bombs. My father dropped bombs on Vietnam. We did not trust each other.

So we signed a very small agreement (we called it a "Letter of Intent"). We decided that we could not even take baby steps, crossing toward each other, only little "spider-steps." We agreed, in writing that: 1) The Americans would bring a delegation to Vietnam; 2) the Vietnamese would bring a delegation to America; and, 3) we would do a conference together in Hanoi.

And, if we still liked each other at the end of these three small steps, we would sign another agreement to work together.

*****

Now, before we go any further, you might be thinking: "I would never be in this situation."

But take a moment to think about your friends, colleagues, family. Maybe you don't have a signed agreement with them, but, if you think about it, you're always evaluating, always negotiating, and you're always communicating. In short, you're always setting up next steps in that relationship or project—whether you realize it or not. You are always living by the contract you have with your work, your friends, your family—whether it's written or not.

And you are accountable to that contract, especially if you want it to continue. This is life.

*****

So, as individuals representing very different institutions, of very deep difference, Mr. Thuy and I created an agreement to work together, building confidence in each other through very small steps. (Although I should note, Mr. Thuy took a much bigger risk than me, having to convince others in the government that I could be trusted.)

A Vietnamese delegation came to America in February of 2006, made up of government officials and religious leaders. We took them to the top-down of American government, introducing them, for example, to leaders on Capitol Hill. We also took them to the bottom-up of America, showing life outside our capital, to include lessons in how our country evolved. We took the Vietnamese delegation to Williamsburg, Virginia (I'm a Virginian), and we learned about religious freedom, as well as slavery.

We had great conversations, but the point is twofold. First, we brought some people over from Vietnam, from their bottom up and their top down, pastors and government officials, to experience our bottom up and our top down.

Second, as you go on these trips and as you ride in vans, and as you walk around these places, you are doing it—together. You are building relationships, professional, and/or personal. You are crossing toward them, and they toward you.

Next, we took the same kind of delegation to Vietnam. As part of the bottom-up experience there, I asked to visit a village where there had been reports of governmental harassment and persecution. So the government let us go where no western NGOs had been before.

During the June 2006 visit to Vietnam's Northwest Highlands, we used dug-out canoes to cross over a swollen river that had washed out the bridge to this very remote village. We visited with them. We prayed with them. The situation got better.

And then we had a September 2006 conference in Vietnam's capital, Hanoi, on religion and the rule of law—the first in Vietnam's history. International experts came and we discussed how the transparent rule

of law might be applied as Vietnam transitions.

At the end of the conference, we signed another agreement—upgrading from a "Letter of Intent" to a Memorandum of Understanding—to work together, detailing our next set of practical steps. We were able to work with each other because we had created a context for collaboration—because we both had to evaluate, negotiate, and communicate with each other as we sought to understand ourselves, and each other.

We continued to work together, and when Mr. Thuy retired, we worked with his replacement, Mr. Bui Van Nghi. The institutional relationship continues to this day, as the 4,600+ people across Vietnam—who have been trained in religion and freedom, security, and citizenship—can attest.

*****

Why did this collaboration work? What were the relational principles that were tailored to this specific context? And can they be applied to any context, that is, with a friend, a colleague, a family member?

There are four key principles: 1) find the story; 2) work top down and bottom up, building trust; 3) understand the self-interest involved; and, 4) take the steps together, celebrating their accomplishment, together.

#1: Find the story. On one of my first trips to Hanoi, I visited a museum and found this quote from Vietnam's founding father on the wall:

> "The teaching of Confucius has a strong point; i.e., self-improvement of personal virtue. Jesus' Bible has a strong point; i.e., noble altruism. Marxism has a strong point; i.e., a dialectical working method. Ton Dat Tun's doctrine has a strong point; i.e., their policies are suited to conditions in our country. Does Confucianism, Jesus, Marx and Ton Dat Tun share common

> points? Yes. They all pursued a way to bring happiness to human beings and benefit to society. If they were still alive today, and if they were grouped together, I believe they would live in harmony, like close friends. I try to become their pupil."
>
> — Ho Chi Minh, 1949

Ho Chi Minh, who is revered across Vietnam, and across generations, is saying, we need a table. The government should provide a table where different perspectives can gather, such that we learn from them.

This quote, which I used to introduce our work, every time, gave permission for their culture to participate in the story of building tables where everybody gets a seat. There's always a local story that allows for inclusion.

#2: Work simultaneously from the top down and the bottom up, building trust. Whatever the context, there is always a top-down and bottom-up. If it's the national scene the top-down is the president and the national government, working on policy and laws. The people would be the bottom-up, governed by the policy or by the law.

But in a family, in might be the parent (top-down) and the child (bottom-up). In a madrassah, it could be the teacher and the student. In the village, the elders and the families. There's always a top down and a bottom up. Collaborating with partners to accomplish projects always takes place at the intersection of the top-down and the bottom-up.

The key in the whole process, I think, is building trust, creating relationships—usually through mutually candid and courteous conversations. I have found that there is a spectrum of engagement in the collaborative competency, that moves from the transactional to the transformational. By "transactional" I mean the understanding that if I help you, you will help me. If we work together, we will serve the self-interest of each of us.

But over time the more you interact with each other, a relationship begins as you cross toward the other, toward the transformational. In fact, I begin to see not only my self-interest but my very identity in my neighbor, and vice-versa.

In July of 2006, amidst that first, "spider-step" agreement with the Vietnamese government, I was asked to testify in the U.S. Senate. I told the senators that there were certainly challenges in Vietnam, but that there were also good things happening, that I had personally witnessed.

In June of 2018, the Vietnamese government awarded its peace medal to the Institute for Global Engagement. After the ceremony was over, a Vietnamese official came up to me and shared that he and his colleagues in the government had been watching my senate testimony twelve years before. He said, "You were honest about our challenges, but you were also honest about our progress. And because of that we trusted you. And that is why you have been allowed to work here for 12 years."

Did I know that they were watching? Did I know any of that? No. I was simply trying to be honest and humble, to testify to the situation that I had seen. Today, because of this precious and ongoing trust, IGE can still visit anywhere in Vietnam.

#3. Understand the self-interest involved. As the relationship deepened and expanded, we became aware of other issues they wanted to address, in order to make their country better. Government officials wanted a comparative analysis of how other countries around the world addressed the rule of law. We convened the experts and case studies, and translated the relevant resources, such that they could make better decisions in their context.

Government officials wanted to know more about the relationship between religion and security. We convened the experts and case studies, and translated the relevant resources, such that they could make better decisions in their context.

Government officials wanted to know more about the relationship between religion and conflict resolution. We convened the experts and case studies, and translated the relevant resources, such that they could make better decisions in their context.

#4: Take the steps together, celebrating their accomplishment, together. Over the years, in all of the interactions with the people and government of Vietnam, did we tell them what to do? Never. Our job is to walk with them as their friend, and to provide opportunities, that they may not have, to learn from other case studies, and resources. We speak to the problems in private, and we celebrate the progress in public.

*****

In conclusion, it is important to say the obvious about this case study: we did not engage Vietnam to make them look like us. We engaged each other—across very deep difference—to serve each other's self interest, becoming friends along the way. It is possible, but always remember: it takes honesty and humility, patience and perseverance, compassion and courage—from both "sides"!

*This document has been prepared for the Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy (LKLB, for its acronym in Indonesian) program, October 2021 – June 2022

THE COLLABORATIVE COMPETENCY: THE ROLE OF TEACHERS AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN BUILDING INTERRELIGIOUS COLLABORATIVE COMPETENCE

By Prof. Dr. Inayah Rohmaniyah, S.Ag., M.Hum., M.A. & Afifur Rochman Sya'rani

In the efforts to reform and transform education, one of the crucial problems faced is that, according to various studies, education reportedly does not provide intellectual freedom. Education in schools or madrasas only transfers knowledge from teachers to learners, and has yet to reach the level of transformation. Education is faced with classic problems, including the small number of qualified teachers, inadequate facilities and infrastructure, minimal learning materials, low quality of education, and lack of support for minorities with disabilities (Margiyanto, 2021). Other problems in relation to learners which are no less urgent include the large number of subjects that are not necessarily relevant to the learners' needs, religious education that has become a means of indoctrination

and thus, not fostering a tradition of critical thinking, as well as the failure to instill norms or ethics in educational institutions. Transformation efforts therefore require those kinds that increase the capacity, quality and experience of teachers as important agents in the world of education. Collaboration is one of the strategic steps that is counted on to accelerate the transformation of knowledge and inclusive practices in educational institutions.

A. Pedagogical Transformation and the Urgency of Teachers in the Efforts for Change

One of the mandates of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the field of education is to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development. The important aspects included in this are education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and the appreciation of cultural diversity, as well as the contribution of culture to sustainable development (UN, 2022). To achieve this goal, education should be positioned as a tool to liberate the intellect, unlock the imagination, and serve as the foundation for building self-respect (Global Goals, 2020). In the context of madrasas and/or *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), ideally education should free the intellect of the students, unlock their imagination, and become their foundation to respect themselves and others. Teachers play a central role in carrying out this global mandate, including teachers in Indonesia, as well as teachers in madrasas and/or *pesantren*.

In an educational system, teachers are central figures, serving as active agents within the contexts and structures of global, national, and specific local policies (Naylor and Sayed, 2014). Comprehensively, the active agency of teachers becomes a determinant in the reformation and transformation of schools and education. Datnow's research (2020) indicates that teachers with different social backgrounds (such

as differences in race, ethnic backgrounds, language, career stages, disability status, and ideological commitments) experience school changes, and their positions influence their roles in school reform politics. Teachers can use their agency to resist change or facilitate it, promote peace-building efforts and/or even trigger conflicts (Horner, L.K., et al., 2015). These dual facets of the teachers' agency can occur in efforts to build a "peaceful" or harmonious tradition in and from educational institutions.

The role of teachers in motivating their students is also equally important, and one of them is creating a conducive learning environment. Teachers play a central role in promoting student autonomy, in developing the students' competencies, in nurturing their interest in the subjects being taught, and in fostering self-efficacy, which is a crucial factor influencing learner motivation (Davion, 2017). The teacher's role as a motivator becomes substantial to ably encourage changes in learners, not just in terms of intellectual capacity. Teachers also serve as agents to bring about changes in their learners' perception of diversity and cross-cultural religion (cross-cultural religious literacy). In this regard, teachers are faced with challenges and demands to, on the one hand, adapt to educational reforms that require them to possess both intellectual capacity and competent teaching and managerial methodologies. On the other hand, teachers are also expected to be a moral compass, a role model, and a catalyst of change for learners specifically and society in general.

B. Collaboration and Its Urgency in the Context of Pedagogical Transformation

Collaboration is cooperation that is carried out between two or more individuals, organizations, countries, or even professions (Green, et al., 2015). According to Green (2015), the benefits of collaboration include enabling learners to achieve a goal together, more than they could achieve when they do it individually. Collaboration also gives

learners experiences to serve a larger group of people and develop into more mature individuals and organizations. There are several key concepts that are relevant to the term collaboration or cooperation, namely sharing, partnership, interdependency and power (D'Amour D, et al., 2005). Collaboration or cooperation is important within educational institutions, including madrasas and/or *pesantren*. Collaboration provides empirical experience to teachers and learners, and develop skills as well as hone astuteness in sharing, partnership, and sharing knowledge and power, and also strengthen appreciation for the reality of diversity.

Collaboration is an essential step in realizing educational transformation. Transformation can be defined as the occurence of a fundamental shift in the structure of an individual's thinking, feeling, and acting. Therefore, an educational process can be considered transformative when said process is capable of fundamentally changing the way learners think, interpret, and act upon the reality of life that surrounds them towards a better direction (Mezirow, 1991; Hunter, 2020). In other words, the process of fundamental change in transformative education lies in the shift of the learners' paradigms or "philosophical worldview".

According to Jack Mezirow (1996), learning is a "process of producing meaning". In this matter, he distinguishes between two models of learning, namely (1) normative learning and (2) transformative learning. If normative learning only goes as far as knowledge transfer, transformative learning is capable of guiding learners to have the abilities of reasoning, arguing, and critical thinking about reality. In the context of religious and cross-cultural diversity, transformative learning thus necessitates learning experiences that can transform the learners' mindset not only towards being tolerant and inclusive but also towards being able to appreciate diversity and being ready to collaborate with individuals or groups who have different religious or cultural backgrounds.

C. From the Transformation of an Individual Towards Interreligious Collaboration

Collaboration across religions and beliefs is the embodiment of cross-cultural religious literacy. Collaboration can be realized when an individual, community, or institution possesses several competencies (skills and intelligence) which enable them to participate in interreligious and cross-cultural cooperation that benefits both parties (see Seiple & Hoover, 2021). The first competency that should be fostered is competency that is related to one's self (personal competency). This competency requires an individual to have self-awareness or a comprehensive understanding of himself. In the context of interreligious relations, this competency requires an individual to possess the intelligence to reexamine and understand the norms and teachings of his own religion. This competency is in line with religious norms that teach, "Whoever understands himself will be able to understand his God." The indicators that an individual has an understanding of his own self include knowing his weaknesses and flaws, and also his merits and strengths. In addition, this competency is marked by an individual's ability to understand what sort of beliefs he has, where do the sources of knowledge that developed those beliefs come from, and the reality that one's beliefs are not always the same as the beliefs of others.

Personal competence is characterized by an attitude of openness, adaptability, high solidarity, and maturity in thinking and responding to differences. These skills make a person open because he is able to override negative thoughts or stereotypes againts other people or communities who have different beliefs. A mature understanding of oneself allows a person to be wise in looking at differences and thus adapt easily. On the contrary, a person who does not have self-competence will dwell on negative thoughts, suspicions and hatred against other people who are different. A person who has personal competence means he has experienced individual transformation

which becomes the social capital to be able to live side by side peacefully and build solidarity with those who are different, without feeling disturbed in his faith and beliefs. The intelligence to understand and assess oneself also encourages a person to open himself to input and even criticism from other people, which will enable him to turn his weaknesses into strengths. Personal competence thus becomes the foundation and main capital for interacting well and collaborating with other people.

Individual transformation allows a person to capably foster relational transformation, that is, a change related to a person's relationships with different people or other parties. Personal competence as the core of individual transformation becomes a requirement in order for a person to ably build a healthy space to interact with those who are different. When a person is already finished with himself and possesses high intelligence and self-awareness, he will be open to mutual caring, supporting reciprocally, and educating others to transform. In the context of religious literacy, at this stage a person will be able to develop comparative competence. This competency is characterized by the ability and willingness to understand other religions from the faith perspective of the adherents of those religions. A person who has intelligence and self-awareness (personal competence) will not feel afraid or threatened when learning about other religions or beliefs direcly from its adherents, who are insiders. Even an accurate understanding of other religions and beliefs will make a person's faith stronger and more inclusive.

This relational transformation which is related to comparative competence and social interaction becomes the capital for building cultural transformation. The cultural transformation stage is characterized by society's collective acceptance of diversity, more collaboration between various faith-based organizations, joint holding of religious celebrations, and more encounters with groups of different beliefs and/or religions. Collaborative competence

is thus a concrete stage that becomes proof of the achievement of Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy endeavors. Apart from individual transformation (personal competence) and relational transformation (comparative competence) as prerequisites for collaboration, several supporting skills are also needed to foster productive and sustainable collaboration.

Apart from self-awareness, a person must possess intelligent communication skills, that is, communication which is effective. Effective communication is characterized by two-way and equal communication. If among the individuals communicating there are those who feel superior and consider others as inferior, then communication will not be equal and thus ineffective. To be able to communicate well, a person is also required to have listening skills and be a good listener. It requires listening intelligence, an attitude of openness, and a positive attitude of respecting other parties even though they are different. When a person feels that there are still barriers, for example prejudices, then communication will not be effective. Poor communication will hinder cooperation and even has the potential to give rise to conflict and division.

D. Building Collaboration among Religions in the Context of Indonesian Diversity

Indonesia is a country that is very rich in diversity, both the ethnic diversity of its population and the diversity of its religions and cultures. There are around 400 different tribes or ethnicities living on approximately 4000 islands, each with its own diverse traditions and cultures. Apart from that, even though Islam is the majority religion, about 87.2% of the population, quite a few people adhere to Protestantism and Catholicism (9.90%), Hinduism (1.69%), Buddhism (0.72%), and Confucianism (0.05%). In addition, there are also communities with indigenuos beliefs, spiritual movements, and other religious minority groups. In the context of this diversity,

constitutionally, Indonesia has a philosophical-ethical foundation that underlies the socio-political order of the state, namely Pancasila. In the socio-political context, the values or principles contained in Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution become public ethics and the values of the common good (public virtues or *kalimatun sawa*) which becomes the basis for interreligious relations.

However, the reality that occurs in the field does not always reflect ideal interreligious life. Disputes, communal conflicts and acts of extremism being carried out in the name of religion are social problems that damage the harmony and collaboration among religions. After the Reformation Period, Indonesia faced communal conflicts that were ethnic-religious based. Among the conflicts that raised concerns were the Ambon conflict involving Islamic and Christian communities, the ethnic conflict between the Dayak and Madurese tribes in Kalimantan, religious violence that occurred in Poso, and others. Apart from that, the media also reported many acts of religious-based violent extremism against religious minority groups, attacks on places of worship, and acts of terrorism that have claimed many lives. Fostering harmonious relations and cooperation among religions is thus an urgent agenda in Indonesia.

Many researches show that communal conflicts which are ethnic-religious based are triggered by various factors, such as extremist ideology, structural problems (politics), and socio-economic problems. However, communal conflict and religious violence can be prevented through solid interreligious relations which are fostered through efforts made by civil society. Studies conducted by scholars show that the stronger and more solid the interreligous collaboration is, the stronger and more solid the resulting culture of peace (Putnam, 1993; Varshney, 2002, Tadjoeddin, 2004). The social capital that exists in society can bolster harmony among religious communities.

In general, interreligious collaboration can be mapped into three domains (Varshney, 2002). First, the quotidian or everyday domain. In

this domain, interreligious communities collaborate or work together actively to solve together the problems they faced daily; for example, at the neighborhood/hamlet level, working together to clean the living environment, helping each other as neighbors, and so on. Second, the formal-associational domain. In this domain, interreligious communities collaborate at a more formal level and are bound by associations, fellowships, organizations or gatherings of those with the same interests. Examples of collaboration models in this domain are trade associations or unions whose members involve interreligious adherents, gatherings based on shared hobbies, interfaith civil society communities/organizations, interreligious based work agencies, and so on. Third, the structural domain. In this domain, interreligious communities work together at the formal-structural level within the government structure as fellow citizens with the same goal, that is, working to serve and advance the nation and state.

E. Building Interreligious Collaboration: Skills, Stages, and the Urgency of the MIT Approach

As formulated by J.B. Banawiratma (2010), collaboration can begin with dialogue in everyday life. Dialogue among members of an interreligious community can be carried out in daily interactions, for instance, as fellow neighbors, co-workers or friends. They know each other and have common interests and concerns about what happens in each other's daily lives, such as health issues, education, children, a clean environment, work professionalism, and others. Diversity as a fact of life demands members of society to ably collaborate with individuals or groups from other religions. In other words, meeting and interacting with people of different religions and beliefs are important steps in building dialogue. Dialogue can run effectively and forge ahead with cooperation that is productive, if individuals have the skills to evaluate their understanding of themselves and of other people and understand the context they face.

Evaluating one's understanding of one's own religion and faith traditions can be done if a person is willing to delve into and understand the values and traditions of his own religion. In this aspect, a person will find the legitimacy that comes from the teachings of his own religion and its shared ethics to build collaboration among religions and beliefs. At this stage, each individual engaging in dialogue tries to analyze the reality of religious diversity and then tries to reflect on the ethics of what should be done in real life. In the process of internal reflection, there are several questions that are points for reflection: why should I interact with people of different religions? How should I behave towards those of different religions? How should I communicate? How should I negotiate in this reality?, and so forth. This process will allow a person to discover shared ethics which becomes the basis for interreligious collaboration.

After that, each member of the interfaith community is required to study each other's faith from the perspective of its adherents. Muslims learn the Christian faith perspective from Christians, and vice versa, Christians learn the Islamic faith perspective from Muslims. This comparative competency is characterized by an individual's ability to look at other people's faiths, establish relationships, and interact with people of other religions. This competency enables individuals to have negotiation skills, namely the skills to find consensus or common ground when facing differences. The next stage is that individuals can build communication that is empathetic in order to create mutual trust. Finally, individuals can establish collaboration or tangible actions that involve individuals across religions and cultures.

Without interreligious collaboration, various humanitarian issues such as education, disaster management, public health, economic well-being, gender justice, human rights and other civic issues, will be very difficult to resolve. Joint involvement among religious communities thus has great potential to bring about a transformative impact on a better shared life. To ensure the continuity of collaboration and

harmony, according to Banawiratma (2010), intrareligious self-criticism is also needed. This means that after going through various processes of meeting, understanding each other, interacting and cooperating, each individual returns to the religious experiences of his respective religious traditions to conduct internal evaluation or criticism. This process involves efforts to evaluate the presence of biases, misunderstandings, and certain stigmas that may still exist about people of other religions. This will allow a person to evaluate himself more and always strive to be a better adherent of his religious community. This shows that to be religious is to be interreligious: to be religious means to be good to fellow religious people.

Collaboration, which requires a person to have personal competence, comparative competence, and collaborative competence as the basis for change (transformation), can be greatly achieved using the Multi-disciplinary, Inter-disciplinary and Trans-disciplinary (MIT) approach (see Abdullah, 2020). Personal competency, which is self-understanding based on MIT, is understanding and studying Islam and its relationship with other religions, from various viewpoints. Understanding Islam should not only be from the normative perspective (textual evidence, exegesis, Islamic jurisprudence) but also looking at it from the perspectives of other sciences such as history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology and other relevant disciplines. From a simple perspective, understanding a religion should not rely solely on one source but should consider a variety of sources so that it can be seen from multiple angles and the values of *rahmatan lil alamin* (mercy to all) in its teachings can be discovered.

Without the MIT approach, a person will easily be tied to literalism in understanding verses, for example verses about *qital* (war) or the conflict between Islam and Christianity in Islamic history, and can potentially use religious texts as justification to be hostile to other religions. MIT is a basic framework for building competencies and skills in the context of collaboration, so that a person can think critically,

transformatively, and understand critically the knowledge he has about Islam and other religions. With MIT, a Muslim will look at various aspects, for example: What is the argument? What is the context of the verse? What is its socio-historical-anthropological context? What is the main message/*maghza*/*maqashid* of Islam regarding this verse? What is the interpretation of some commentators? What are the similarities and differences in the existing interpretations?

F. Best Practices: Interreligious Collaboration at the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University, Yogyakarta

1. Interfaith School Program

The Interfaith School (SLI, for its aconym in Indonesian) is a jointly designed program, a collaboration between the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University (UIN, for its acronym in Indonesian), Yogyakarta with

DiAN Interfidei, Duta Wacana Christian University (UKDW, for its acronym in Indonesian) and Sanata Dharma University (USD, for its acronym in Indonesian). These institutions sat together to jointly formulate the curriculum used in this Interfaith School. The curriculum is designed to provide knowledge reinforcement, enriching experiences, and encounters with various stakeholders and religious institutions. The lectures are designed as follows: 10% in class with field orientation, 60% field visits and live ins, and 30% critical reflection. Lectures are held in relevant places according to the predesigned themes. Field visits are selected based on the interrelationship between issues related to the focus of the study and the supporting field context.

The Interfaith School Program is held throughout the second semester of every academic year (February - May) and takes place every Saturday at 09.00 am – 12.00 pm. SLI participants consist of 30 students from the Faculty of Theology of UKDW, Faculty of Theology of USD, Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought

of UIN Sunan Kalijaga, and Institute for Interfaith Dialogue in Indonesia/Interfidei (Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Sapta Dharma, etc.). The students come from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. They learn together for 14 meetings. These Interfaith School participants learn about religions with resource speakers from the respective religious adherents. When learning about Islam, a knowledgeable and experienced Muslim speaker is invited. When studying Catholicism, a priest is invited who is available for discussion. A pastor is invited to speak on Protestantism and discuss with them on the topic. Similarly, when studying Hinduism and Buddhism, SLI participants learn directly from the adherents of these religions.

The learning process is conducted by moving to different locations in line with the themes being discussed. Lectures take place in various locations, such as: a) Places of worship (mosques, churches, temples, seminaries, Islamic boarding schools, etc.); b) Relevant social institutions; c) Civil society organizations, campuses, local government authorities; d) Other collective learning institutions.

The approach used in learning is the andragogical approach, which is adult learning that emphasizes active student participation. The instructor or teacher serves as a facilitator who guides the students. The methods used in the learning process include discussions (panel, group, individual), sharing knowledge and experiences, reference presentations, whether based on experiences, books or readings, field visits, meetings and dialogues, and live-ins. At the end of each class, participants compose reflections done in various forms such as written narratives, songs, poems, visual art, and more, which they will present in the following week.

The SLI program is very effective because, without realizing it, students who previously had negative stereotypes against those

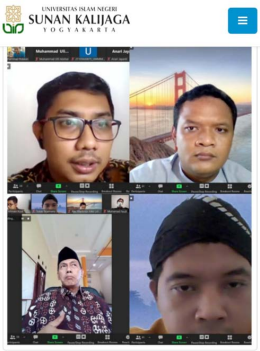
of different religions and/or beliefs, were then able to override and get rid of prejudices that hindered their interactions and relations. Many students, even those in semester 5 or semester 3, apparently do not have any experience in interacting with friends of a different religion. After participating in SLI, many gave testimonials that showed significant transformation. Among the testimonies of SLI scholars are:

> "Oh Allah, Ma'am, they are really kind. Oh Allah, Ma'am, it turns out they are delightful to talk to."
>
> "This is the first time I experienced meeting and talking with non-Muslims, Ma'am, and wow, it turned out to be very remarkable and not as scary as I had previously thought."
>
> "I used to be afraid of Muslims, thinking later they might be terrorists, right? Wah, they say Muslims are exclusive."

Thus, in the end, stereotypes dissolve on its own, even disappear. When they meet, greet, engage in activities together, a sense of brotherhood and solidarity among the students automatically develops.

2. Tolerance School

This project was designed by students from the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. The series of Tolerance School events include the webinars: "Conflict in Religious Communities: Is it Really Because of State Injustice?", and "Religion and Media: Segregation of Religious Society in the Digital Age." Apart from that, there was a Road show virtual tour entitled, "A Closer Look at Religious Rites and Beliefs: Poncowinatan Temple, Jogjakarta".



Resource speakers were brought in to talk about their respective religions. The public figures invited as speakers were Father Dr. Martinus Joko Lelono, SS, M. Hum. representing Catholicism, Pandita Muda Totok Tejamanu representing Buddhism, and KH Achmad Labib, S.E., M.M. representing Islam (2021). This activity was conducted online, making it accessible to more open and diverse participants.

3. Field Study Practice

Another program which is an embodiment of interreligious collaboration at the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta is packaged as Field Study Practice (PKL, for its acronym in Indonesian) activities. PKL is designed with several activities including:

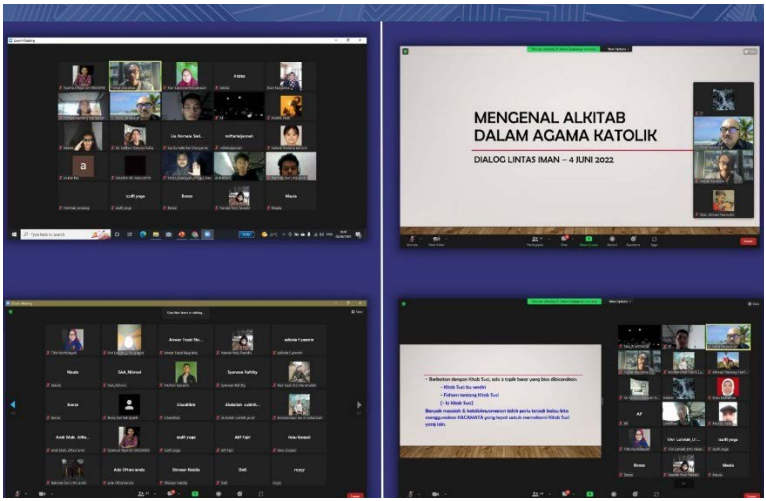
- Visits to the places of worship of other religions
- Visits to religious events
- Visits to religious leaders
- Sit-ins in courses on non-Islamic religions at other institutions.

Field Study Practice is a routine agenda for students in semester 7. In this matter, the Religious Studies Study Program carried out its field study practice by visiting the Ratanavana Arama Temple and the Sunan Bonang Historical Site, both in Rembang, Central Java. This activity is a form of applying the knowledge and insights that have been gained in class. The forms of activity are divided into two parts. The first part is in the form of scholarly knowledge on how to understand religious practices as they should be. The second part involves training in video documentation. This training is meant to equip students before going into the field to document activities. The training in video documentation covers techniques for capturing objects on video, the editing process, and the finishing touches with a cinematographic approach. The resource person for said training is led by an expert in the field of video making, Haetami (Kancing Baju Production). Then as objects of documentation, there are field visits and video-taking. The implementation of the activity

involved 45 students and was supervised by 2 accompanying lecturers and the Head of the Religious Studies Study Program.

4. Interfaith Discussion: Getting to Know the Bible of the Catholic Religion

Another program which is also an embodiment of interreligious collaboration at the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought, UIN Sunan Kalijaga were the discussions held by the Study Program Student Association, one of which is the Religious Studies Study Program. Among them were Interfaith Dialogue activities which were done online in the post-Covid-19 period. These events were an effort for Religious Studies students in particular and society in general to get to know each other and avoid misunderstandings among religious communities.



This event was held online to facilitate students who were still in their hometowns during the pandemic era recovery period. The theme of the event was "Tadarus Bible: Getting to Know

the Bible of the Catholic Religion." The keynote speaker was Dr. Dian Nur Anna, S.Ag., M.A. (Head of Religious Studies Study Program at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta) and the main resource person was Father Dr. V. Indra Sanjaya (Lecturer at the Faculty of Theology, Sanata Dharma University, Jogja).

This theme was chosen for Muslim students to know more about the Bible of the Catholic religion, how Catholics understand their Bible, as well as its history and differences with Protestants. The purpose of holding this interfaith dialogue is not to serve as a platform for debating or showcasing one's own religion, but rather to act as a space for discussion among students and serve as a tool for molding students who can spread the spirit of tolerance.

The dialogue event was attended not only by Religious Studies students from UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, but also by Religious Studies students from other institutions. In addition, theology students from Sanata Dharma University and Duta Wacana Christian University also participated. "This discussion was organized so that we can learn and understand each other better, because differences are real, so they are not important in themselves. What is more important is how we respond to these differences," this was the moderator's closing statement at the closing of the event.

List of References

Abdullah, M. Amin. (2020). *Multidisiplin, Interdisiplin, Dan Transdisiplin: Metode Studi Agama Dan Studi Islam Di Era Kontemporer.* Yogyakarta: IB Times.

Banawiratma, J. B. (2010). Apa itu dialog? In J. B. Banawiratma and Z. A. Bagir (Eds.), *Dialog antar umat Beragama*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Mizan.

Bart N. Green, Claire D. Johnson; Interprofessional collaboration in research, education, and clinical practice: *working together for a better future*. *J Chiropr Educ* 1 March 2015; 29 (1): 1–10. doi: https://doi.org/10.7899/JCE-14-36

D'Amour D, Ferrada-VidelaM, San Martin Rodriguez L, Beaulieu MD. The conceptual basis for interprofessional collaboration: core concepts and theoretical

frameworks *J Interprof Care*. 2005;(suppl 1):116–131.

Datnow, A. The role of teachers in educational reform: A 20-year perspective. *J Educ Change* 21, 431–441 (2020). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-020-09372-5

Horner, L.K, Kadiwal, L, Sayed, Y, Barrett, A, Durrani, N and Novelli, M (2015) *Literature review: the role of teachers in peacebuilding,* available here https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320852023_Literature_Review_The_Role_of_Teachers_in_Peacebuilding

Hunter, Amy. (2020), "Transformative Learning in International Education", in Savicki, V. (Ed.). (2020). Developing Intercultural Competence and Transformation: Theory, Research, and Application in International Education. Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Johnson, Davion. (2017). The Role of Teachers in Motivating Students To Learn. *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, Volume 9, Issue 1, 2017. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1230415

Margianto, Heru (ed.). (2021). Transformasi Pendidikan Mulai Menggeliat, tapi Belum Optimal. *Kompas.com*. Database online, diakses pada 22 Juni 2022, di alamat https://www.kompas.com/edu/read/2021/11/05/091452071/transformasi-pendidikan-mulai-menggeliat-tapi-belum-optimal?page=all.

Mezirow, J. (1991). Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning. Jossey-Bass, 350 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94104-1310.

Mezirow, J. (1996). "Contemporary Paradigms of Learning". Adult education quarterly, 46(3), 158-172.

Putnam, R. D. (1993). What makes democracy work?. *National civic review*, *82*(2), 101-107.

Seiple, Chris, and Dennis R. Hoover. "A case for cross-cultural religious literacy." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 19.1 (2021): 1-13.

Tadjoeddin, M. Z. (2004). Civil society engagement and communal violence: reflections of various hypotheses in the context of Indonesia. *Politics Administration and Change*, *42*, 1-18.

United Nations. (2022). Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Database online, viewed on June 2022 here https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4

Varshney, A. (2003). *Ethnic conflict and civic life: Hindus and Muslims in India*. New Haven, USA: Yale University Press.

THE COLLABORATIVE COMPETENCY:

WITH LOVE AND AFFECTION: SOCIAL CAPITAL OF INTERFAITH COLLABORATION FOR PEACE

By Dra. Yayah Khisbiyah, M.A.

To the ladies and gentlemen of the committee from the Leimena Institute, also from the Maarif Institute, the Head of the Center Muhammadiyah, especially the Basic Education Council, and the Malik Fadjar Foundation, I would like to thank you because I was invited back to participate in this program which we all think, I also personally think, is very important.

To all the participants, ladies and gentlemen, teachers and asatidz - asatidzah who Allah SWT glorifies, I say my affectionate greetings and deep respect for the role of all ladies and gentlemen in shaping the noble character of our young generation. The training participants this time consisted of teachers and religious teachers from Muhammadiyah schools and madrasas. These teachers have all had rare

opportunities to participate in this Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy (CCRL) training. I give high appreciation and respect because the participation of teachers in this CCRL training is not just because of interest and curiosity. It takes patience and courage to follow the relatively new CCRL topic, which may invite controversy from the environment, especially from conservative circles. We believe that participation in this CCRL training, insyaAllah, is very relevant for strengthening *ukhwuwah wathaniyah* (national brotherhood) and *ukhuwah insaniah* (humanity brotherhood), apart from being, of course, also beneficial for *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (brotherhood among Muslims).

I deliberately joined the session with the resource person, Rev. Henriette Lebang, at the forum the afternoon before my session. Rev. Eri --that's what we call her-- provided an extraordinary presentation, which, in my opinion, has provided broad insight through an internal perspective from the point of view of an authentic Christian believer. Her presentation, followed by questions and answers with the training participants, was an arena for *intersubjective communication* between two parties with different religious beliefs. This intersubjective dialogue has created shared spaces (*common rooms*) and meeting points (or *kalimah sawa›*). This space for joint encounters has melted the ice created by the perception and fact of the differences between us and by the gap in social relations due to the absence of dialogue space between the various adherents of the pluralistic religions (*diversity)* in our society. Meeting points or *kalimah sawa',* such as the session between Muslim teachers and Christian Reverend, Mrs. Eri, need to be reproduced in various forms and opportunities in our society to achieve the goal of strengthening the national vision of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* through efforts to foster harmony and social justice in the spirit and values relevant to Pancasila. The principles in Pancasila that are relevant to CCRL are primarily the 1st principle, namely "Belief in One Almighty God"; the 2nd principle, namely "Just and Civilized

Humanity," and the third principle is "Indonesian Unity".

The committee also informed me that ladies and gentlemen have all attended training for the past few days, with several other extraordinary presenters from various religious and cultural backgrounds, some of whom even came from other countries. The CCRL Training Approach invites speakers from abroad, including Prof. Chris Seiple from the United States, who is a Christian, and Rabbi Ari Gordon, who is a Jew, in addition to leading sources and figures from the Islamic faith, are very appropriate to expand our brotherhood as fellow human beings and fellow creatures in the unity of the creation of Allah Almighty.

I have looked at the list of participants and found a lot of diversity. For example, some teachers participating in *this* CCRL are teachers who teach at *Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* and Elementary School level. Some others are teachers at the Middle School level and *Madrasah Tsanawiyah*. Some others are in M*adrasah Aliyah* or high school level. There is also diversity in the background of teaching subjects; there are those who teach Islamic religious subjects, for example, ISMUBA (Islam, Muhammadiyah, and Arabic), the Qur'an and Hadith, Akidah, Ahklak, Islamic History and Culture or SKI. However, some teachers teach general subjects unrelated to Islamic religious education, including mathematics, Indonesian, natural sciences, natural sciences, and arts. With diversity among the speakers and fellow participants, this becomes a rich treasure and a valuable human resource asset when we deliver CCRL to achieve the goals I mentioned at the beginning, namely strengthening the ties of ummah brotherhood, national brotherhood and global brotherhood.

What I also need to mention is that between participants, all of these consist of various sexes and gender roles. The ratio between men and women is quite balanced. Namely, more than 50% of women participated in this program, which fulfilled the minimum quota for women's participation. The participants come from all different

regions, which is amazing! Some come from Java, but others come from Sumatra, Kalimantan, NTB, NTT, and even Papua. In short, participants were represented from various regions, from Sabang to Merauke. It is important to mention the diversity of regional origins because it contains the potential for interaction between Indonesian subcultures, urban or city culture, and *rural* or village subcultures. In the dynamics of life where we live, changes of domicile often occur; for example, teachers born in West Java and ethnically Sundanese are now teaching in Papua. A teacher born in Madura now teaches in Aceh, and so on. There, acculturation processes occur, perhaps even cultural assimilation, which influences how we think, behave, and act through the experiences shaped by the cultural areas in which we were born, grew up, worked, and created, which is influenced by various kinds of inter-cultural interactions.

As an example, I can take a sample myself. I was born and came from Cirebon. From birth to high school, I grew up in Cirebon, where my mother comes from, and part of the time in Indramayu village, where my father comes from - especially during school holidays. But I grew up as an adult in Yogyakarta, which is more multicultural and has a cosmopolitan social atmosphere. After graduating from Cirebon High School, I studied at the UGM Faculty of Psychology. I lived in Yogya for 12 years, from my undergraduate studies until my master's degree. After completing my Bachelor's degree at UGM, I received a UNESCO scholarship for the Peace Studies practitioner certification program in Austria-Europe, followed by a Fulbright scholarship for a Master's degree in the United States, a Rockefeller Foundation scholarship for two years of training in the field of Sustainable Development where lecture sessions were conducted. In Brazil, Chinese and graduated in Russia, and finally received a scholarship from Australia to study for a Ph.D. in Melbourne. Domestically, my experience living for more than ten years in Yogya has significantly influenced my personality and *worldview.* Now, I live

in 2 cities, namely commuting between the city of Solo (my primary work affiliation at Muhammadiyah University Surakarta) and Jakarta (residence ID card, family life, and activism at PP Muhammadiyah). These *cross-cultural* experiences in many cities and countries and exposure to *inter-religious* relations at home and especially abroad continue to shape my personality and views on various issues, topics, life, profession, religion, and relationships, and friendship.

All *hijrah (*moving) processes *simultaneously muhibah* (traveling) geographical and cross-cultural certainly influenced my cognition, affection and behaviour. Shaping who I am now. But I have not finished "being": there will be an influence from cultural and religious encounters in the future on my thought patterns, attitudes and actions. So, I have an identity. My true self is very fluid and multicultural because I am defined not only as Sundanese, where I was born, but also by the presence of God, the intersection between cultures and sub-cultures, or the subculture I interact with. The purpose of telling examples about my religious and cultural identity is that I also want to invite all ladies and gentlemen to look within themselves and their own experiences and ask themselves: Who am I? in the context of the diverse cultural influences around me? Am I growing up only influenced by the culture I was born from? How is my identity influenced by my family's culture, ethnicity, and religion?

Regarding gender roles, you can also ask yourself: for example, as a woman, am I only influenced by feminine characteristics? Or am I also influenced by masculine characteristics? As a man, do I get the influence of feminine traits and personality from my mother or grandmother? As a Muslim, what schools of thought shape my religious views? How does interaction with other cultures and religions influence my religious beliefs? Dear ladies and gentlemen, these questions are interesting to review throughout our lives because self-reflection is the key to optimal and meaningful growth. Throughout time, we have always lived in the diverse influences around us. Then, we try to

position ourselves through the best, inclusive perspective, which can guide us in acting and behaving amidst the inevitability of pluralism and the complexity of social relations in community life. At the local and national levels, especially in this era of industrial revolution 4.0: the global level.

This introduction will hopefully make you more prepared to enter. The session I was asked to deliver was the Collaborative Competence session. In this session, using the approach of Peace Psychology and Social Psychology, which are my fields of knowledge, I will sharpen the material presented in the Personal Competency and Comparative Competency sessions, which other presenters presented before this session.

The aim of this Collaborative Competency session, as I refer to from the TOR given to me by the Leimena Institute and the Maarif Institute, is to improve the ability to work together between citizens of different cultures and religious beliefs. This ability to collaborate will not occur if there is no ability to mutually understand differences or *mutual understanding,* which is the goal of Comparative Competency.

The explanation from Rev. Eri earlier has reinforced Comparative Competence. Mrs. Rev. Eri explains the principles of Christian teachings, namely, the characteristics of the attitude of believers recommended by God Jesus to His people.

When we listened to her presentation, we wondered why they are the same and how her teachings are so similar to the principles of my religion, of our religion, Islam. That's where I mentioned earlier, there is a meeting point or kalimah *sawa'* , and there are spaces of mutual intersection, spaces of encounter.

We feel we all are one creation and our God is one, but our respective families and religious communities shape our religious traditions and theology of faith. Information and habituation about how to worship and do mu'amalah, for example, from the time we

were born until now, determines whether we follow a particular school of thought or a certain religious sect. Imagine, and compare it with your imagination, if we were born and raised from a young age by a family with a different denomination and religious sect, we might become people with beliefs different from our current beliefs.

John Galtung, one of the founders of peace science, said there are elements *of soft religion* and *hard religion in studying religion*. Soft religion is a dimension of core religious values where it turns out that many of the values are similar or even the same between one religion and another. For example, all religions teach love and *mercy* to all creatures created by Allah Almighty, especially to people who are marginalized, poor, or *underprivileged.* All religions prohibit killing, stealing, corruption, destroying the environment, lying, and committing acts of violence. That is the dimension *of social religion,* where many religions have intersections and meeting points.

Hard religion is *the surface* skin or wrapper. The packaging can include various traditions, ways of worship, and religious symbolism. So, in essence, there are many ways and multiple paths to achieve the same goal: the pleasure of Allah Almighty. There are many roads to Rome. So, this is one understanding of why, as humans, we are so different but have the same human essence. There is one humanity with the same or similar spiritual values, but there are many phenomena of religious sects, denominations, and schools, especially those determined by the sociological dynamics of religious organizations.

Next, I want to ask several relevant questions, which can be reviewed again by all ladies and gentlemen. This could be in the first wave of training, it could also be in the second wave of training, for example. This may be answered later during the Q & A.

The first question is, where can Indonesians find the values of inclusivity? Inclusive values are values that embrace and invite the involvement of *others* or different parties, containing social solidarity

amidst social plurality, with respect for those who are different, who do not execute and stay away from different parties. The cloud of inclusiveness is exclusionary.

The second question is, how can the values of Pancasila and our national principle, " Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" be consistently applied to every Indonesian's behavior from an early age?

The third question is, what role can each person and group of the nation's children take in respecting *Sunnatullah* differences and maintaining the unity of the Nation amidst the plurality of its citizen groups?

Fourth question, how can educational institutions become pioneers in internalizing the values of Pancasila and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika to embody Personal Competency, Comparative Competency and Collaborative Competency, which are the main vision of this CCRL program.

So, we are now talking not only as Muslims, or as Christians or as Confucians, Buddhists, Hindus. But we are bound by one unity, the identity of the nation called Indonesia. Indonesia, which our *founding parents*, the parents who founded our nation, have worked hard for. We have a moral obligation to maintain patriotism and inclusive nationalism, as well as to defend it. The challenge is in our country, our nation has many ethnic groups, races, religions, languages, and other things that I do not think I need to mention again because all the ladies and gentlemen already know and are refreshed from previous sessions.

Now, an important reflection of thought for all ladies and gentlemen as teachers, and me also as an educator at the university: How do we apply the values of Pancasila as the philosophy of our country, as the basis of the state and also as a star that unites and guides the direction of our national movement, for every Indonesian from an early age? From an early age, meaning since Children are in the care of parents and families as the smallest unit of socialization

in society, also in playgroups, kindergarten, and elementary schools up to *middle* school, high school, and higher education levels. Well, the participants in this training are spread across all levels: some in elementary school, some also in middle school and high school. I teach at a college level. They are the product of the learning process that has been carried out by all parents at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. I care and focus on all ages and all levels of education, including early childhood. Through the Center for Cultural Studies and Social Change at UMS, for example, me and my fellow lecturers, researchers, and activists, are trying to design multicultural education, peaceful Islamic education. The name of the program can change, but the core objective is the same: to foster a progressive Islamic character and religious moderation (*Wasathiyah Islam*) that loves peace based on social justice. My interest through the UMS study center and other institutions is Citizenship Education, civic education, or civil society education, starting from early childhood to student age.

So, ladies and gentlemen, whom I respect because we take part and work in the realm of education, are active in making contributions to the nation and the people through educational service, thus we need to spread Islamic values that are *rahmatan lil alamin*. Inclusive Islamic values have long been promoted and implemented by Muhammadiyah since it was founded by KH Ahmad Dahlan, long before the independence of our beloved Republic, namely since 1912. Through the call of *ukhuwah wathoniah or* national patriotism, we are obliged to spread the values of Pancasila and instil them in students, so they are able to implement them in everyday life. Moreover, Muhammadiyah has long upheld Pancasila as *Darul ahdi wal shahadah* or as a pillar of nationality, which is an agreement that has been made and witnessed to be implemented in collective life.

Through Pancasila education, as well as through Al-Islam and Muhammadiyah (AIK) education, we can provide direction and examples for students to be able to deliberate. The essence of

deliberation is the ability to hear sounds and opinions that differ from ours. Knowledge and virtue, as well as wisdom, provide opportunities for owners of different voices and ideas to convey aspirations, thoughts, opinions, and feelings that may be different from ours.

In deliberations, we are required to have *listening skills* (listen empathetically or understand), not just *hearing* (literally listen). If we are able to hear each other empathetically, then we are not talking one way with the desire to dominate and force others to agree with our opinions. What happens in deliberation is dialogue, listening to each other - not talking to each other - to reach an agreement based on mutual understanding in the principle of togetherness to achieve a common goal. Mutual listening and giving opportunities to each other who are different from us to talk about and express their opinions are actually beneficial. The purpose is so that we can respect the dignity of every human being. Allah Almighty's creation has the same human rights and equal dignity (*musawwa*). This must be taken into account as good practices or *best practices,* starting from the most micro level (microsystem) in the family and school, then in the neighborhood and community environment, including religious organizations (mesosystem), government institutions, and the community (exosystem), down to the level of ideology, state policy, and broader religious and cultural values (macrosystem*)*.

In the school environment, there is a relationship between teacher and student, student and student, teacher and parent, student and parent, teachers with school boards and socio-educational organizations, religions, government institutions, and so on, similar to a broad and complete network of life. Therefore, take part in CCRL as an effort to build a new civilization that is peaceful and harmonious and becomes an extraordinary charity for all ladies and gentlemen through instilling CCRL characters and values and their implementation to female students to have the qualities of *salaam* and Islamic vision as *rahmatan lil alamin*.

Next, what is the actual purpose of collaborative competence? Many experts say that if we are able to understand differences, then we will know each other. Knowing and understanding are the capital for growing respect and affection. If we already know each other, ladies and gentlemen can refer again to Surah Al Hujurat verse 13, that Allah created us into tribes and nations so that we can understand each other. Allah creates humans into tribes and nations: this means that differences are natural and necessary, something which is *sunatullah*, which we cannot eliminate. Even within our own families, there is a *sunnatullah* diversity in traits, personalities, hobbies, gender, habits and lifestyle, religious orientation, and so on. There are many differences between one individual and another. But is there any benefit from that difference? The benefit is to get to know each other and do mutual comparative advantage or benchmarking in order to advise each other and inspire each other for goodness and progress. To compete in honor, *fastabikhul khairat*. If we already know each other, what happens next? Ladies and gentlemen can refer to each other's experiences; when they don't know each other, suspicion usually arises. If there is no trust or belief, then there is a priori. From a priori, from the absence of trust because of not knowing it, then fear arises towards others, towards parties, or people and groups that we do not know. It turns out that usually, the other party also has the same feelings and prejudices. They do not know us, so they feel afraid and threatened, especially when you get wrong information, fake news, or hoaxes from individuals and groups who want to cause trouble and pit themselves against one another in order to instigate conflict. If we do not know each other, then we easily believe negative stereotypes, doubts, or prejudice. And then, we are easily consumed by this false fear and hatred, and ultimately, social segregation arises, which can even trigger violent conflicts and bloody wars.

The social, economic, and psychological costs will be very expensive for *sunnatullah* if we do not manage well the inevitability

of religious and cultural differences and diversity. We see now that conflicts quickly arise between parties who do not know, respect, and trust each other. Phenomenon bloody violence from starting level regions such as Aceh, or Tolikara in Papua, up to the international level, for example, war Russia with Ukraine and Israel with Palestine. In Ambon, we have also experienced the same thing: bloody conflict between Christians and Muslims. Thank God there are many *peace provocators* - or what John Paul Lederach calls inter-religious peace actors - who are working together in Ambon, including Christian pastors Mr. Jacky Manuputty and Muslim figure Mr Zainal Abidin Wakao, Mr. Ihsan Malik from NGO Titian Peace. They all work together to overcome the root causes of conflict through a religious approach so that Ambon can be restored and become a peaceful city again. I have been to Ambon with the UNICEF team to help overcome the trauma of children affected by conflict. I did this with colleagues from various religious and racial-ethnic backgrounds as practitioners of peacebuilding based on a spiritual approach. We work together hand in hand, even though our experiences are different, because only with cross-faith and cross-cultural cooperation can the goals of achieving justice, security, peace, and prosperity be achieved together through collaboration and woven bonds of social relations.

The question is, how do we instill a culture of peace in schools? I want to mention some key characteristics or traits that we need to instill in our students, as well as, of course, in our communities and our families. There are three key traits: empathy, tolerance, and solidarity.

I will also provide good examples (best practices) that have been exemplified, especially by the leaders of the Muhammadiyah organization. Professor Dr. Din Samsudin, who was the general chairman of Muhammadiyah's Central Board from 2005–2015, became one of the pioneers who pioneered activities for interfaith encounters at local, national, and international levels. Previously,

Prof. Dr. Ahmad Syafii Maarif, whom we often call Buya Syafii, and Prof. Malik Fadjar also set many examples of inter-religious friendship and collaboration. One of many partners who organized this CCRL training event is the Ma'arif Institute, taking from the legacy of his thoughts about the need to build peace across groups, which includes inter-faith cooperation as well.

We also have Prof. Dr. Haedar Nashir. We often call him Kyai Haji Professor Haedar. He held various activities, collaboration with the Catholic community in Rome Italia, together with Sant ' Egidio, held a training entitled "Peace without partitions," which was also mentioned by Rev. Eri. So, the goal is how we need to build bridges of social solidarity, not cut bridges or allow the gap between cultural and religious entities to widen. By building bridges, we can meet in common spaces and get to know each other; then, we can collaborate to overcome any problems in the world. United we stand, divided we fall.

Then, there is Prof. Dr. Abdul Mu'ti, who is an expert in the field of education. I once saw a picture of him attending an event at the Vatican and is standing side by side with one of the Jewish rabbis. In Indonesia, he is also currently Chair of the Indonesian Conference on Religions and Peace (ICRP).

The following slides are examples of good practices that the Leimena Institute and Maarif Institute committees requested from my activities and work. So, the Committee asked me to share my experiences at Muhammadiyah and UMS, in particular, in implementing collaborative competencies. At UMS and Muhammadiyah, my team and I have had a lot of collaboration with various cross-cultural and cross-faith groups. For example, we create Islamic-based peace education programs. Now underway for students, Pancasila revitalization education for students at Muhammadiyah and Aisiyah universities is expanding to other private universities and state universities because our program is considered innovative, exciting, and relevant.

Islamic-based peace education is aimed at junior high school students. Then, we also did a multicultural camping for high school. So high school students from Javanese, Arab, and Chinese tribes in Central Java are facilitated to get to know each other and collaborate to complete social problem simulations and games in a 3-4 day camping together. The results of the program evaluation show success in achieving the goal: students from Christian, Catholic, Islamic, and plural ethnic backgrounds stated that friendship had been established without any suspicion, and they were happy to collaborate to solve problems around them and were ready to become future leaders. Well, this is extraordinary; it turns out that they can find joy as well as diamonds of wisdom from cross-faith and cross-ethnic encounters, interactions, and friendships. The problem is many of our young people do not have the opportunity to meet in meeting space. So far, we have lived more in our own safe pockets and comfort zones with people of the same religion or the same culture. We live in our own bubbles, coconut shell balloons. Do not interact with each other so that stereotypes, prejudice, suspicion, and even a priori hatred without devotion, without foundation, emerge. However, when we are facilitated to meet and then get involved in games, chats, and conversations, we discover what Johan Galtung previously called the "soft side of religion". Friendship in humanity will indeed grow authentically when identity politics is put aside, and united goals in humanity are put forward.

The team at UMS and I have also designed a Tolerance and Peace program through Traditional Arts for elementary school students. The aim is to respect and celebrate cultural and religious differences, but through art, in this case, Javanese art, because the locus of our activities is centered in Central Java. Traditional arts in the form of wayang, gamelan, and dance performances are introduced to children while practicing these traditional arts. They came to understand that art is not only in the form of drum bands, Arabic tambourines, and

kasidahan, but there are also Javanese *gendings* whose songs contain Islamic spiritual lyrics. They also know and enjoy the Javanese *Serimpi* dance and the symbolic meaning behind each movement. There is also a butterfly dance as a social fun activity while also introducing the flora and fauna in the natural surroundings. If you want to make the dance look Islamic, then we can change the costume into a costume that covers the private parts, for example.

It turns out that cultural encounters can be carried out using various methods. You can do it through arts, through sports, and you can also do outdoor camping, which includes community service activities. Game and simulation methods have been proven to be effective in providing an understanding of the need for tolerance and collaboration in children and adolescents. It could be developed further in the next wave of training at an advanced level. Hopefully, these examples can become models for all of us to develop in the future.

Let us return to collaborative competence: What good is it for us after getting to know each other? After getting to know each other, feelings of affection and care for each other will naturally arise. This affective modality is a natural driver of the desire to work on the same thing that is concrete due to the emergence of a sense of togetherness. "We" changes to "Us". As emphasized by many peacebuilding experts based on Islamic values, Intercultural and inter-religious equality is really needed at this time to overcome various problems of human life in different local, national, and international areas (Abu-Nimer, 2010). Humanity experiences contemporary issues and challenges that cannot be resolved individually but rather through collaborative synergy intersectoral, interdepartmental, interfaith, and cross-cultural. Just name the type of problem: all problems can be collaborated between faiths, between cultures, and between civilizations. Environmental issues, for example, have genuine interdependence and interconnectivity between one sector and another. If we destroy

forests in one area, other areas will be affected by smoke pollution, floods, landslides, and so on, which we now term as climate change.

Likewise, for example, with greedy people, who wants to add a personal vehicle, even though they already have one. Increasing the number of cars in one country will use up non-renewable energy from other countries. Another example is that the state does not provide an excellent public transportation system, so we are forced to have private vehicles, which causes traffic jams, increases corruption, increases stress, and decreases people's mental health. In the end, what happens is we have traffic jams everywhere, we have pollution everywhere, rampant corruption, crime increases, and the suicide rate also increases. How to solve it? Christians will not be able to solve this problem alone. Muslims alone will not be able to solve it either. We, all of us, must work together.

Among the various crises and problems facing humanity, we must mention corruption. It is imperative to say corruption because this problem destroys the order of peace. Poverty is difficult to eliminate if corruption is not stopped. The rich-poor gap will widen if corruption is maintained. Quality education is difficult for all levels of society to access if corruption is maintained. So, peace based on justice will not be achieved if corruption, which undermines the order of judge, is not eradicated. When corruption occurs, there is a large portion of citizens whose welfare is reduced due to their fundamental economic rights being stolen and confiscated by other unauthorized parties.

Corruption can take the form of small-scale corruption carried out by individuals, government institutions, or social organizations, which we often refer to as a culture of corruption and congregational corruption. But we also have to mention corruption at a massive, structural, and gigantic level, which is often referred to as part of oligarchy. Well, the problem of corruption, whether in the form of collective cultural corruption, systemic corruption, or incredibly massive structural corruption, cannot be solved by Sundanese alone,

Javanese alone, Christian brothers alone, or by a group of Muslims only. We must collaborate to overcome the endemic corruption at its roots.

As a closing, I need to underline once again that the aim of getting to know each other, as recommended by our religion, is to strengthen social modalities to build social cohesion. Strong social cohesion will create the desire and ability to collaborate, to be more effective in overcoming common problems, and to achieve common goals, both as a neighborhood, sub-district, region, province, nation-state, and as a united human race, citizens of the only one planet earth. Collaboration will be more effective and efficient than doing something alone. If you only use a stick of broomstick, it will be useless. Of course, maybe it can only move one leaf. Even then, it is not easy to do, and the stick can even break. But when you combine a lot of stick and turned it into a broomstick, in the form of a collection of a number of stick tied tightly, then it can sweep up a lot of rubbish quickly and cleanly. With cooperation, we can wipe out corruption together, we can also stop climate change, and so on.

Further Reading:

Abu-Nimer, M. (2003). *Nonviolence and peace building in Islam: Theory and practice* (p. 137). Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

Abu-Nimer, M. (2010). *Nirkekerasan dan Bina Damai dalam Islam: Teori dan Praktik*. Pustaka Alvabet.

Galtung, J. (1997). Religions, hard and soft. *Crosscurrents*, 437-450.

Lederach, J. P., & Appleby, R. S. (2010). Strategic peacebuilding: An overview. *Strategies of peace: Transforming conflict in a violent world*, 19-44.

RESOURCE PERSON PROFILE

Chris Seiple (Senior Research Fellow, University of Washington)

Dr. Chris Seiple is Senior Research Fellow for Comparative Religion at the University of Washington's Jackson School of International Studies, where he first developed Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy. He is also the Principal Advisor to the Templeton Religion Trust and President Emeritus of the Institute for Global Engagement. He is widely known and sought after for his decades of experience and expertise regarding issues at the intersection of geopolitics, US foreign policy, Asia, conflict resolution, human rights and religion. He is a co-editor of the forthcoming Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism, and Global Engagement. Follow Chris Seiple on Twitter: @cseiple

Prof. Dr. Inayah Rohmaniyah, S.Ag., M.Hum., M.A.

Prof. Inayah, is the Dean of the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought, Sunan Kalijaga Islamic State University, Yogyakarta. The recipient of the Satya Lencana Karya Satya Twenty Year award, is often invited as a key speaker, resource person and guest lecturer at various universities and institutions at home and abroad. This active board of PKBI Yogyakarta has been an expert staff at the Vital Voice Global Partnership, the Education Fund Management Agency (LPDP) of the Indonesian Ministry of Finance, and the United Nations Population Fund Indonesia. She holds a MA degree from Arizona State University, United States of America and a M.Hum (Master of Humanities Studies) and doctorate from Gadjah Mada University.

Dra. Yayah Khisbiyah, M.A.

Faculty of Psychology, Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta (UMS), and Founder and Director of the Center for Cultural Studies and Social Change at UMS. She learned Psychology from Gadjah Mada University, Social/Community Psychology from the University of Massachusetts-USA, and Peace Studies from Uppsala University, Sweden. She is also a lecturer in Applied Conflict Transformation Studies, Master's Program at Pannasasthra University & Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, Cambodia. She is committed to integrating her scholarship and activism in three action-research areas: peace psychology, religion for just peace, and ecological, holistic well-being.

Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy (CCRL) is an approach to thinking, acting, and acting to be able to work together with different religions and beliefs (collaborative competence), based on an understanding of the moral, spiritual framework, and personal self-knowledge (personal competence) and people. other religions and beliefs (comparative competence).

CCRL is based on the belief that awareness and belief that the common good for humanity will be achieved not when the diversity of religions and beliefs is rejected or merged into uniformity, but precisely when the diversity is affirmed and managed together by different adherents through a process of evaluation, communication, and negotiation. together to respond to various opportunities and challenges faced, both in local and global contexts.

institut Leimena

TEMPLETON RELIGION TRUST

ISBN 978-602-61538-7-6

9 786026 153876 >