



CROSS-CULTURAL RELIGIOUS LITERACY

ISLAM-THE PERSONAL COMPETENCY

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Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy: Islam – The Personal Competency

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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, Them, and What Can Be 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

CROSS-CULTURAL RELIGIOUS LITERACY

Islam – Personal Competence Session*

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 occurred 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 uncondusive 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-ʿImrān, 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

CROSS-CULTURAL RELIGIOUS LITERACY

Islam-Personal Competence Session*

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 madrasahs 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 “Madrasah Reforms: Indonesia Experiences”, on July 29, 2021.¹

According to the 2021 data of the Ministry of Religion, madrasahs in Indonesia consist of Raudhatul Athfal, Ibtidaiyyah, Tsanawiyah and Aliyah totaling approximately 82,408 madrasahs. Only 5% of that total (4,010 madrasahs) are funded by the government through the Ministry of Religion, while 95% (78,408 madrasahs) are under private management. 15,582 madrasahs 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 madrasahs registered in the Maarif NU Educational Institutions,² while under Muhammadiyah, there are 1,908 madrasahs registered in the Muhammadiyah Primary and Secondary Education.³ The rest are managed by other Islamic

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>

3 <https://dikdasmenppmuhammadiyah.org/dapodikmu-jumlah-madrasah/>

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 Tsanawiyah 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 developed. Our education is not yet able to accommodate the needs

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

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 Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, *Rencana Strategis: Kementerian 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 dzakarini wa untsha, 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. 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).” 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).

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 <i>Maqasid</i> Theory	Contemporary <i>Maqasid</i> Theory
1.	Protection of religion (<i>al-din</i>)	<u>Protection, preservation, safeguard of and respecting the right to freedom of religion and beliefs of all people, whatever the religion and belief</u>
2.	Protection of honor; protection of life (<i>al-'irdh</i>)	Protection and preservation of human dignity; <u>protection and preservation of human rights</u>

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

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/>).

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RESOURCE PERSON PROFILE

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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.

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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.

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.