

A VIGILANT AND BARKING DOG: JUSTICE AND TRUTH IN BUILDING PEACE

A Response to Dr. Robert J. Suderman: The Church's Witness to Peace

J.B. BANAWIRATMA

Guru Besar dan Dosen pada Fakultas Teologi Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana

Abstraksi: Tulisan ini menanggapi ceramah Dr. Robert Suderman yang berjudul “The Church’s Witness to Peace”. Perjuangan untuk perdamaian terutama dilihat dari perspektif dunia ketiga. Perdamaian harus diperjuangkan bersama dengan perjuangan untuk keadilan dan kebenaran. Kemiskinan adalah salah satu wujud ketidakadilan. Oleh karena itu gerakan perdamaian harus berusaha mengatasi kemiskinan, harus mendahulukan kepentingan kaum miskin dan tidak berdaya. “World Social Forum” merupakan sebuah tanda yang membangkitkan pengharapan untuk memperjuangkan perdamaian bersamaan dengan keadilan dan kebenaran, dengan mendahulukan jeritan kaum miskin yang menanggung ketidakadilan.

Kata-kata kunci: perdamaian, keadilan, kebenaran, mengatasi kemiskinan.

First of all I want to extend my appreciation and gratitude to the speech of Dr. Suderman. He reminds and invites us to the evangelical vocation for witnessing peace. He also invites us to return the design of Jesus, Prince of peace: Non violence as gospel’s message. This is my only critical question: I have impression, that Dr. Suderman proposes “a strategy of an immaculate lamb”. Today in our world, especially in the so called third world, don’t we need other strategy that is “a strategy of a vigilant and barking dog”?

I understand the strategy proposed by Dr. Suderman suited to the context of the US, where Christian like George W. Bush called for “crusade” after the event of September 11, 2001. The first imperative is “Do not kill!” But it seems to me in the Indonesian context and other countries, where poor people always suffer under structural violence, the strategy of immaculate lamb helps not much.

When Abdurrahman Wahid was President of Indonesia a Commission of Truth and Reconciliation was formed. Around that event people discussed whether

it would not be better to form “Commission of Peace and Reconciliation”. Others wanted to have “Commission of Justice and Reconciliation”? As far as I know, until now the commission has functioned not well. Nevertheless the phenomenon of deleting “Truth” and inserting “Justice” is worth to reflect. In this occasion I want to raise 3 points of reflection: (1) No peace without justice and truth, (2) Movement for peace in overcoming poverty, (3) A sign of the time: World Social Forum.

1. No Peace without Justice and Truth

The Research Centre for Rural and Regional Development (*Pusat Penelitian Pembangunan Pedesaan dan Kawasan*) at the Gadjah Mada University Yogyakarta has done a research on seven cases of collective violence in Indonesia 1995 - 1997. The research came to the conclusions (299-313) that:

“Generally speaking, the causes of conflict and the outbreak of collective violence are part of the political violence in the society. *Basically,*

violence originated at the level of state and social structure, controlled by the state apparatus and the owners of the big business companies. The economic development process resulted in capital accumulation, while the growing gap between rich and poor has facilitated the emergence of conflicts. The anxiety and frustration of many is caused by the incapability to control their life and to participate in the process of the public decision-making, which influence their future.”

During the New Order regime there was too much peace and harmony rhetoric, and to claim for justice was considered subversive. But the reality was conflictive and violent! There have been always victims. Witnessing peace means to stand on the side of the victims. *Vox victimarum vox Dei*. God hears the voice of and stands on the side of the victims. Unless justice persuaded, peace and harmony is not more than false and fragile harmony, since it contains violence that can explode any time. To witness peace must struggle for justice.

It might be useful to remember the statement of Vatican Council II (1965), *Gaudium et Spes*, art 78):

“Peace is not merely the absence of war; nor can it be reduced solely to the maintenance of a balance of power between enemies; nor is it brought about by dictatorship. Instead, it is rightly and appropriately called an enterprise of justice (Is.32:7).”

World Council of Churches (1985) incorporated Integrity of Creation in the struggle of Justice and Peace.

The enterprise of justice however can not escape from the exercise of power. The idea of power proposed by Michel Foucault (1980) might help us to understand. Power is not property owned by someone or group. Power is exercised rather than possessed. It is operating in all places

as the field of force. To struggle for justice means to counter unjust power. For Foucault power and knowledge presuppose each other. Those who master the knowledge exercise power and power produce knowledge. The struggle for justice needs power and knowledge that can be generated through discourse and representation.

In fact the production and reproduction of power and knowledge have been endeavored by many NGOs. Their resistance, prophetic denunciation, ideological critique and advocacy as well as their proposals for the reconstruction of society (Schreier 1998), are efforts to exercise positive power in the field of force.

Violence goes hand in hand with lie. Narrating lie is a mechanism to cover violence. Without truth there is only false harmony where structural violence is going on. Return to the design of Jesus means accepting the design of a prophet that uncovers lie and accuses the practices of violence. From the story of Cain and Abel up to the crucifixion of Jesus the Bible contains so many stories of violence and lie. The Johannine Jesus put it very strongly.

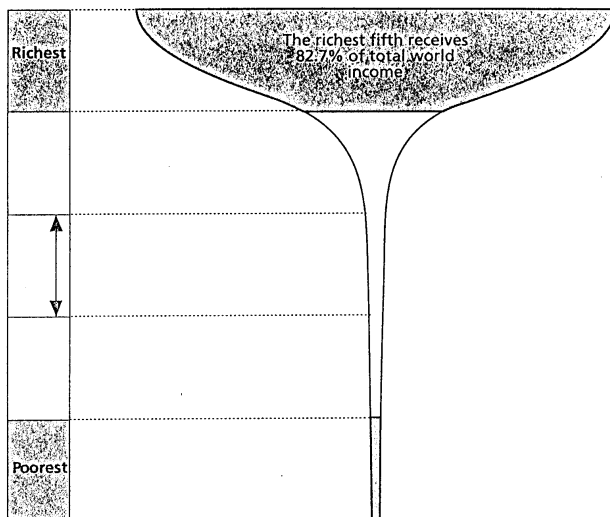
“You are from your father, and you choose to do your father’s desires. He was *a murderer from the beginning* and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is *a liar and the father of lies*.” (Jo 8:44)

Narrating truth implies uncovering violence and lie. Gayatri C. Spivak, a feminist and postcolonial theorist, advocates for the right and the need to narrate. In a Foucaultian perspective, this is to disseminate discourse and representation generating counter culture against culture of death.

2. Movement of Peace in Overcoming Poverty

One of the most blatant phenomena of injustice is poverty. Injustice that increases all the time will perpetuate poverty. Nevertheless Jeffrey D. Sachs, Professor of Economics at Columbia University, New York, in his book *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time* (2008), wrote: “Most people are unaware of the daily struggles for survival, and of the vast numbers of impoverished people around the world who lose that struggle.” Moreover Jeremy Seabrook, a journalist and writer on social issues, in his book *The No-Nonsense Guide to World Poverty* observes that “The rich are hooked forever upon the boundless growth of the agent of their enrichment and no longer know the meaning of ‘enough.’ The ancient dream of ‘sufficiency’ is lost” (In Lloyd 2008).

The UNDP (United National Development Program) report 1992 give very shocking information. The 20% of the world population, the richest, consume 82.7% of the world income, and 20% of the world population, the poorest, consume only 1.4% of the world income.



Perhaps our condition today is worse than the year 1992. Surely that more than 100 million Indonesian people live in survival economy. The whole economic process is

delinked from the need of the poor people (Herry-Priyono 2008).

Following John Paul II's Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, on the celebration of the day of peace 2009, Benedict XVI wrote a message "fighting poverty to build peace":

"... the Church... constantly hears echoing in her heart the command of the Prince of Peace to his Apostles: "*Vos date illis manducare* – Give them something to eat yourselves" (Lk 9:13). Faithful to this summons from the Lord, the Christian community will never fail, then, to assure the entire human family of her support through gestures of creative solidarity, not only by "giving from one's surplus", but above all by "a change of life-styles, of models of production and consumption, and of the established structures of power which today govern societies"... The truth of the axiom cannot be refuted: "to fight poverty is to build peace."

Pope Benedict XVI writes that the church "constantly hears echoing in her heart" the message of her Master. But I think it is not less true that the Church "constantly forgets" the message and does

World Population	World Income
(1) Richest 20%	(1) 82.7%
(2) 2nd 20%	(2) 11.7%
(3) 3rd 20%	(3) 2.3%
(4) 4th 20%	(4) 1.9%
(5) Poorest 20%	(5) 1.4%

many other things that contradict the message. Related to a change of life-styles, we might congratulate the Mennonite community in USA who seriously tries to live on simplicity.

God enters in a covenant with the poor against Mammon. This covenant has been embodied in Jesus of Nazareth. Based on that belief, Aloysius Pieris (1999) poses three following formulas: (1) Wherever God is loved and served, it is the Poor who rules,

and not poverty; (2) Wherever the poor are loved and served, it is God who rules, not Mammon; (3) “No salvation (jbb: or peace) outside God’s covenant with the poor.” Similar to this is the expression of Bishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero: *Gloria Dei vivens pauper*, God is glorified in the poor that lives.

3. A Sign of the Time: World Social Forum

During the last week of January 2001, for the first time, intellectuals and social leaders from all over the world gathered in *World Social Forum*, in Porto Allegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. This is the state where the Workers’ Party has governed (already 12 years in 2001) with a participative program with social inclusion and solidarity. The peasants, workers, indigenous peoples, women, Churches, citizens’ networks, local authorities and NGOs from Latin America, North America, Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East, challenged the hegemonic thinking. Democratic, pluralist and solidary thinkers were there, including the Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff; Egyptian economist Samir Amin; Indian feminist and ecologist Vandana Shiva.

The main objectives of *World Social Forum* are to create an alternative space for theoretical, cultural, political, economic and social thinking as well as providing an encounter space for various organizations that in the last few years have been resisting the neoliberal project. The WSF discusses the production, distribution and concentration of world richness among and within nations. There were discussed the problems of work, employment, financial capital and the consequences of IMF and WB promoting structural adjustment programs. Another theme is democracy and the loss of sovereignty of Nation States and the lack of democratic or citizen control over transnational and large international agencies.

The “globalization from below is moving on” (Nolan 2009). In 2004 World Social Forum took place in Mumbai, India. In January 2006 World Social Forum gathered in three places at the same time (in Mali, Africa, in Caracas, Venezuela, and in Karachi, Pakistan). The neoliberal project is project for statusquo with the slogan “There Is No Alternative” (TINA). World Social Forum is a symbol of movement for change with the motto “Another World Is Possible” (Wibowo 2010). It envisions New International Economic Order (NIEO). World Social Forum can be categorized as an international “vigilant and barking dog”. It is a global resistance to unjust and violent structure; it is a global civil society, a symbol of movement for more justice, more truth, and more peace. The energy of this “globalization from below” appeared already in 1999 in the battle of Seattle, where more than 100 thousands ordinary people and intellectuals demonstrated and caused to fail the conference of Ministers of Trade protected by “Super Power” in the forum of World Trade Organization. To struggle for justice and peace should read the sign of time. The movement cannot escape from exercising power in the field of force.

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