

The Role of Christian Education in Educating Church Members Concerning "Thanksgiving" as a Form of Local Wisdom of the Minahasa Community

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Abstract. Christian education has an important role in educating church members to understand many things that are specifically related to the faith of believers. A bigger and wider role in educating citizens as intended needs to be real so that the benefits of this role can be enjoyed by all parties. Concerning the local tradition, the celebration of Thanksgiving for the Minahasa community; It is necessary to strengthen the role of Christian education in educating every church member, so that cultural wealth as part of this local wisdom can properly be implemented and accounted for in the Christian faith. Every tradition in a society cannot be separated from the local beliefs that follow. The concern that this tradition will lead to syncretism practice in the church needs to be carefully considered so that problems do not arise in the future. The celebration of Thanksgiving in the Minahasa community tradition needs to be preserved, but the understanding that intersects with the Christian faith should not harm Christianity itself. Thus strengthening the role of Christian education in educating church members must be carried out correctly. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach.

Keywords: Christian Education, Thanksgiving, Local Wisdom and Church Members

1. Introduction

Education is very important for human civilization. Through it, a person will be able to live every aspect of his life. That is why this statement is true, namely that education is believed to be able to bring enlightenment to life for the community and is considered to be able to build a better civilization in human life. With education, it plays a role in educating people so that they can live their lives. In the context of Christian education, ideally, the implementation of Christian education is not only to form intelligent human beings through mastery of various sciences and technologies; but rather an intelligent effort to form people who believe in Christ and think and act based on the principles of the Christian faith. Christian education is needed for church members as a tool that can be used to live a Christian faith life.

Minahasa is one of the tribes that inhabit the archipelago, precisely in the province of North Sulawesi. The name "*Minahasa*" is allegedly derived from the word "*Minaesa*" which means unity. The Minahasa tribe consists of a number of sub-tribes, including Tontemboan, Tonsea, Tombulu, and Bantik. These four sub-tribes have a fairly large population; however, there are also other sub-tribes, namely: Babontehu, Pasan Ratahan, Ponosakan, and Tondano.

Like other general tribal groups, the Minahasa community has a number of traditions that have been carried out from generation to generation. From a number of existing traditions, some of them have begun to be ignored, but some have been preserved until now. Tribal traditions are part of the life of the Minahasa community which is also local wisdom for the people. One of the traditions of the Minahasa community that continues to this day is Thanksgiving. This Thanksgiving tradition is also known as "*foso rumager um banua*", which is an old tradition of the "*Tou*" (people) of Minahasa as a form of gratitude for the blessing of "*Opo Empung Wailan Wangko*" that has been bestowed upon mankind.

Because the tradition of thanksgiving is thought to have existed long before Christianity entered Minahasa, the alleged emergence of syncretism practices needs to be watched out for. That is why the role of Christian education needs to be strengthened in order to educate church members in the implementation of the thanksgiving tradition responsibly in the context of the Christian faith. However, the tradition of "Thanksgiving" has become a part of the local wisdom of the Minahasa community.

2. Theory

Education is believed to be able to make impactful changes in human life. That is why education is important in building the civilization of human life, and Christian education is more oriented towards teaching related to the Christian faith. Werner C. Graendorf states that Christian education is a process of teaching and learning based on the Bible, centered on Christ, and responsible for the power of the Holy Spirit that guides each person to a level of growth through teaching today towards knowing and experiencing God's plan and will through Christ in every aspect of life, and equipping them for effective ministry, centered on Christ the Great Teacher and the commandment that matures the disciples. So Christian education must be able to appear by making a significant contribution in educating church members so that they become mature in the Christian faith. They can also take an ethical decision responsibly when they are dealing with matters concerning their faith life.

The Minahasa community with all the cultural richness in it is able to survive from time to time because they are able to carry out various things related to their cultural wealth. The hereditary traditions that are now part of local wisdom have at least influenced the life of the Minahasa tribe today. Local wisdom or "local genus" is understood as the sum of the cultural characteristics which the vast majority of people have in common as a result of their experiences in early life. And this local wisdom refers to various cultural riches that grow and develop in a society that is known, trusted, and recognized as important elements that are able to strengthen social cohesion in the community. All community groups have their local wisdom which has a fairly high cultural wealth. Minahasa community that have many traditions in their culture that are passed down from generation to generation also experienced this, one example of it is Thanksgiving.

The celebration of Thanksgiving is a cultural treasure that is the local wisdom of the Minahasa community. Before Christianity arrived in Minahasa land, the tradition of *foso rumages* was a ritual of giving sacrifices or rages to *Opo Empung Wailan Wangko* through their ancestors. For the Minahasa community, the name *Opo Empung Wailan Wangko*, refers to the Almighty God. So *foso* or ritual, and *foso rumager um banua* refers to the ritual of thanksgiving for the harvest. The problem is that this tradition arose before Christianity entered the land of Minahasa, so that its implementation in the life of the Minahasa community, which is predominantly Christian, needs to be examined more deeply to avoid the practice of syncretism that can endanger the life of the Christian faith that is embraced by most Minahasa people.

3. Methodology

This research used a qualitative method and carried out with a descriptive approach and tends to use analysis. Sources of data in this study through literature review. The study begins by describing the role of Christian education in educating church members regarding the celebration of thanksgiving as a form of local wisdom of the Minahasa community. The collection of qualitative data as a process of ongoing research is carried out through a series of stages which include: data collection and processing.

4. Result and Discussion

Regarding the origin of the Minahasa people's ancestors, it cannot be separated from the origin of the Austronesian people that are now known as Indonesia. Slametmuljana asserts that: About 2000 years BC, the old Mon-Khmer peoples occupied the mainland of South and Southeast Asia ..., were pushed out by the Burmese from the Tibetan plateau and by the Tai people from the Yunan plateau, who constantly flow moved to the south, because it was driven out by the Wu tribe in Yunan. As a result, the Mon-Khmer people and the Continental Malays, who were essentially one family, became disorganized. Part of this family of people is scattered, almost covering the entire mainland of South and Southeast Asia.

The Minahasa tribe inhabiting most of the province of North Sulawesi has a historical relationship with the Dutch that had colonized Indonesia for about 350 years. Even though the colonialism was painful for all parties, the Minahasa people were still bound by the agreement signed on January 10, 1679; which implicitly recognized the Dutch existence of the Minahasa community, where there was an acknowledgment of the same high position as the Dutch in the agreement. So that during the Dutch colonial period, the land of the Minahasa tribe was dubbed as *De Twaalfde Provincie van Nederland*. Minahasa is considered the 12th province; which means to be part of that country; which of course with the same rights and obligations as other provinces in the Netherlands, such as Drenthe and other provinces.

In the cultural context, the Minahasa community as a human group, in general, has a rich culture that it has lived for generations. This cultural wealth is then lived by the community and even preserved as part of the local wisdom of the local community.

The Role of Christian Education in Educating Church Members

As it is known that is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have religious-spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills needed by themselves, society, nation, and state. In its implementation, there is a process that must be followed to achieve something that is expected. The process that leads to changes in the attitudes and behavior of a person or group of people to mature humans through teaching and training, the process of action, and how to educate is also understood as education. With conscious efforts and through a process, education becomes a force in building human civilization and realizing this, many countries in the world place education as a human right. Someone will be more capable by the education provided to them because the knowledge and skills they master will make a person capable of making a decision, as said by R. Alexander: "*Pedagogy is the act of teaching together with its attendant discourse. It is what one needs to know, and the skills one needs to command to make and justify the many different kinds of decisions of which teaching is constituted*".

In the context of Christian education, its implementation must be related to all aspects of the Christian faith. It must be remembered that Christian education is based on the Bible as the word of God, and Jesus Christ as a person who is an example in it. Through Christian education, it is hoped that students will be enlightened and even come to the knowledge of Christ. Iris V. Cully agrees with this statement, stating that indeed Christian education aims to help the younger generation of Christians not to go with the flow but to live and grow before God in Jesus Christ. The role of Christian education is indeed trying to make believers grow their faith in Jesus Christ. This effort in educating church members concerns all aspects of life, including matters relating to culture in the community itself.

The role of Christian education in educating church members regarding the local wisdom of one area is said to be actively strengthened in this matter. Christians who are radical or secular will be nurtured through learning Christian Education, because of its basis and orientation. Don't forget that every believer has the mandate to devote himself to the gospel to the attention of all mankind, this is a responsibility that cannot be ignored.

Thanksgiving Celebration as a Form of Local Wisdom for the Minahasa Community

Culture is a complex totality that includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, and any abilities and habits acquired by some members of society, culture also refers to the way people think and act.

These things then appear in the life of a community group. The Minahasa community has its own culture and it is believed that this has been going on for a long time, and has been preserved until now. The life of the Minahasa people can be seen from the reflection of their culture through their beliefs and behavior in everyday life.

The study of Thanksgiving in the Minahasa community tradition is always associated as a form of gratitude and worship to individuals who are considered worthy to receive it. The Minahasa people call it *Opo Empung Wailan Wangko*, referring to the Almighty God. Ivan R. B. Kaunang stated that Minahasa ancient Christianity, which is an old belief held by all tribal children living in Minahasa, was a time when the educators were still living modestly or primitively, which the Dutch called "*alifuru*". Since Christianity came to Minahasa, this religion has received acceptance from the community so that it develops and becomes the majority belief.

The tradition of Thanksgiving or *rumages* or also known as *Rumages Um Banua*, namely thanksgiving for the harvest; and is a tradition carried out by the Minahasa community as a form of gratitude to God. A long-standing tradition, also known as "big meal" long before Christianity entered the Minahasa when they still worshiped ancestral spirits; which is considered to be able to protect them from disaster. It is conceivable that the tradition of Thanksgiving was born when people were still living in disbelief. The moral message of this Thanksgiving tradition is how people are grateful for what they receive, and this form of gratitude continues after Christianity entered the Minahasa land. Based on the historical records of Christianity in the Minahasa land, Catholicism was first brought by Diego de Magellan from Spain, which was then followed by many other Catholic missionaries. then in 1672, Montanus carried out evangelism which was then followed by J. G. Schwars and J. C. Riedel in 1831. Efforts to evangelize are considered successful in converting the majority of the Minahasa population. Thus, many old traditions that took place in Minahasa, including Thanksgiving continue to this day. However, if previously this tradition was filled with local beliefs of the Minahasa community, now it has become a tradition in the context of the church, and even the church has always been involved in the Thanksgiving tradition.

Christian education must play an active role in teaching the principles of Thanksgiving as an expression of gratitude to God for His grace. If previously this thanksgiving was to another person who was worshiped; now affirmed the existence of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of mankind (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). The teaching of this faith can be done through sermons in churches and teaching in schools. Thus, the Minahasa community can understand that "Thanksgiving" is a form of people's gratitude to God.

5. Conclusion

The tradition of Thanksgiving is one of the local cultures that has been going on for a long time and still being carried out up till now in the life of the Minahasa community. The Minahasa people carry out Thanksgiving as an expression of gratitude, and this tradition has become one of the local wisdom because of the moral message in it.

The celebration of Thanksgiving was associated with local beliefs before Christianity entered Minahasa, which is why when this celebration was held after Christianity became the majority religion of the Minahasa community, there was fear of syncretism. That is why the role of Christian education is needed to maintain the purity of the Christian faith.

Christian education can play an active role by providing an understanding through the church pulpit and also other forms and patterns of teaching to church members. So that in carrying out the celebration of Thanksgiving should be done as thanksgiving only to God.

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