



Contextual Islamic Theology – Contemporary (A Study of Hasan Hanafi's Contextual Theology)

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Abstract : *In the development of modernity, Religion is often criticized, which then in response to that criticism, people began to question again and look for the most authentic relationship between religion and modern problems. The response appears in various forms of renewal of religious understanding based on the context that occurs. Among the forms of renewal, it is colored by the emergence of Hasan Hanafi's contextual theology with liberation theology, Modernist Theology that desires to modernize the Muslims, trans formative theology that wants to realize the transformation of Muslims societies and inclusive theology that invites Muslims to live an Inclusive religious life, tolerance and respect for religious pluralism. This research is library research with a focus on contemporary contextual theology. Data is collected through documentation techniques that collect data contained in various books, printed journals and online journals. The data that the author has collected was then analyzed deductively. From this research, it can be concluded that this contextual theology talks about God and His relationship with humans both based on revelation and reason. While contemporary theology is theological thoughts that emerged in contemporary times, which emerged to modernize or advance Muslims, realizing the transformation of Muslim society so that they can achieve progress, and the development of religious understanding and life that is inclusive, tolerant, and respectful of religious pluralism*

Keywords: Islamic Theology; Contextual; Contemporary

INTRODUCTION

Theology cannot be separated from every religion; it is theology that discusses the basic teachings of a religion to give its adherents a belief that is based on a solid foundation and is not easily swayed by the circulation and development of the era. Therefore, it is theology that is related to matters of aqidah (belief) which have a very large influence on the behavior and

attitudes of a religious follower, both individually and as members of society.

Like other religions, Islam contains exclusive claims. Even considering the fact that Islam is a revealed religion, Islamic exclusive, in certain aspects, is definitely strict. This is clearly seen, for example, in the two sentences of the creed which are testimony and confession towards the absoluteness of God and

at the same time the validity of the apostleship of Prophet Muhammad SAW. The acknowledgment of the Absoluteness of God, which is called the doctrine of monotheism, is one of the central concepts of Islam, as well as the processing faith about Prophet Muhammad SAW as the last messenger sent by Allah to the earth. However, it is important to note, in addition to these exclusive claims, Islam also places special emphasis on religious inclusive, as can be seen in the verses of the Al-Qur'an, such as those contained in the QS, al-Maidah (5): 3, and QS. an-Najm, (53); 3-4.

Traditionally, in Islam discourse on theology concerns three big things: such as: the faith and status of a Muslim who commits a "big sin", human determinism and freedom, and the attributes of God. However, it is different from what some people think, that theology is relatively constant or does not change. Along with changes and shifts in time, the patterns of thinking in theology also experience changes and shifts, which is much influenced by the context of certain historical situations and conditions faced by Muslims, which in turn encourages thinkers, scholars or ulama to give certain responses that seem inconsistent with the theological understanding they follow. Thus, there is a certain context in theology among Muslims. In popular parlance, this can also be referred to as "contextual theology". (Azyumardi Azra, 1999: 43), which was then followed by the emergence of the term "contemporary

contextual theology". This is the focus of this research.

Academically, there have been many discussions about contextual theology, including:

First: "Contextual Theology (Study of Abdurrahman Wahid's Thought), Muhajir's Thesis, State Islamic University (UIN) Alauddin Makasar. In this thesis, the author categorizes Abdurrahman Wahid as a thinker of Neo-modernism in Indonesia. Although Abdurrahman Wahid is a post-Traditionalist thinker who carries out a critical dialogue with traditions in Indonesia and is different from Neo-modernism which tends to sort out traditions that are appropriate and not compatible with Islam.

Second: Contextual-Informativeness Islamic Theology, written by Bur Said published in the Frankish journal State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN) Kudus, Volume 1, no.1, January-June, 2013. In his research, Said concluded that "Islam will continue to meet the challenges of the times with the various problems it faces, when its adherents creatively context and transform its teachings by always trying to find the "deepest meaning" of the spirit of the texts of the Holy Scriptures.

Third: Theological Approach in Islamic Studies, by Luk Luk Mufidah, published in the journal Misykat, volume 02, Number 01, June 2017. In this paper, the writer concludes that the impact of the normative theological approach gives birth to a theocentric pattern of

thought. Islamic theology is ahistorical, not contextual and not empirical and only talks about itself and about its own truth (truth claims). In addition, it is difficult to distinguish between the normative aspects which are sacred and those which are only the result of thought (ulama's ijtihad) which are relative and profane. As a result of the existing theological thinking, everything has become sacred, so as an effort to reconstruct theological thinking, an anthropocentric approach is needed. The anthropocentric theological approach, of course, does not intend to change the central doctrine of divinity, concerning the oneness of God, but rather an attempt to reorient religious understanding, both individually and collectively, in addressing empirical facts from a divine perspective.

The difference between the author's research and previous research is in terms of the focus of the research, if the previous research discussed the contextual theology by focusing on the thoughts of KH, Abdurrahman Wahid, the second study discusses trans-formative theology and the third study discusses the theological approach in Islamic studies. Meanwhile, this writer's research discusses and examines Hasan Hanafi's theological thinking and theological reforms in Islam that have emerged in contemporary times.

RESEARCH METHODS

The writing in this article when it is viewed from the theme of the discussion, it can be categorized in

the study of renewal of thought in Islam. Based on the type of research, this research is included in Library Research with a focus on contemporary contextual theology. Data is collected through documentation techniques that collect data contained in various books, print journals and online journals. The data that the author has collected and then analyzed deductively, which means the researcher draws conclusions from general things and draws conclusions in detail and specifically.

RESEARCH RESULTS and DISCUSSION

1. Definition of Contextual Theology

Contextual theology is a combination of two words, namely theology and contextual. Etymologically, theology comes from the word Theos which means "God" and "logos" which means "science" (*science, study, discourse*). So, theology means "the science that discusses about Godness" or "the science of divinity" or the science that talks about God in all its aspects and His relationship with nature. (A.Hanafi, 1989 : 11). Therefore, the word theology always means discourse or discussion about God.

Terminologically, the Encyclopedia Americana, as quoted by Eka Putra Wirman, states that theology is "*the study or science which treats God, His nature and attributes, and His*

relations with man and universe". Theology examines eschatological issues in the transcendent and profane dimensions. Therefore, the discussion about the role of God becomes the most important and essential thing. (Eka Putra Wirman, *Republika.co.id*, Juni 2020). Meanwhile in the New English Dictionary the term theology is defined as the science that discusses the facts and phenomena of religion and discusses the relationship between God and humans "*(the science which treats of the fact and phenomena of religion, and the relation between God and men)*". (A. Hanafi, 1989: 5).

This definition has the same meaning as explained in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Religions* where theology is defined as "The science that talks about Godness and His relationship with the universe, however, it is often extended to cover the entire field of religion. In this sense, it seems that the words of theology are more accurately matched with the term *fiqh*, and not only with the science of *kalam* or *tauhid*. The term *fiqh* here is not meant by the science of *fiqh* as we understand it so far, but the term *fiqh* which was used before the science of *fiqh* was born. Imam Abu Hanifah, the father of *fiqh*, wrote the book *al-fiqh-u'l-akbar* whose content is not about the science of *fiqh*, but rather about *aqidah* which is the object of the

science of *kalam* or *tauhid*. It may be that the science of *fiqh* as it is currently developing in the framework of Imam Abu Hanifah's thought is *al-fiqh-u 'l-asghar*, which concerns the field of *furu'iyah* (details or branches). (Djohan Effendi, 1994: 52)

According to the theological definition above, it is indeed religious in nature, or it can be said as a systematic reflection on religion, or a thought-provoking description of religion. However, theology can also be non-religious. According to A. Hanafi, a theologian can explain his investigations based on the spirit of free inquiry, without being a religious person or having a certain affinity with a religion. Theology religion pattern (*revealed theology*) is not religion it can also be non-religious (*natural theology or philosophical*). Theology can be religious in nature (*revealed theology*) or non-religious (*natural theology or philosophical theology*). Therefore, he interprets theology as a science that talks about God and his relationship with humans, either based on the truth of revelation or based on pure reason investigations. (A. Hanafi, 1989: 12). Contextual comes from the root word "context" which means a situation that has to do with events. While contemporary means at the same time, at the same time. (*Kamus Bahasa Indonesia*, 1990: 458).

Based on explanation about definition above, it can be understood that contextual theology is a science that talks or discuss about God and his relationship with humans, both based on revelation and reason, and is related to an event. In other words, theology that fits the context.

2. Contextual Theology

Religion is understood as the source of the true images of this world, because it is believed to come from revelations that were revealed to humans. In this case, borrowing Jalaluddin Rahmat's distinction about two kinds of Islam as a religion, namely conceptual Islam and actual Islam. Religion in this context is intended as a conceptual religion, that is, a religion that is contained in Holy Scriptures, books, or lectures on religion. (Jalaluddin, 1991: 1).

However, in the development of modernity religion is often criticized, then in response to that criticism, people begin to question again and look for the most authentic relationship between religion and modern problems. When the birth of religion is seen as a protest against society and its way of life, the critical and revolutionary dimension of religion lies here. In this sense religion was born to oppose all forms of injustice and other social inequalities. Religion opposes all forms of tyranny due

to individual interests dictated by their *respective vested* interests.

Contemporary theological thoughts should be a reflection from the bottom up, of the reality projected on religious texts. Meanwhile, religious thought (theology) has so far been based on the "diversion" model which only transfers the text to reality. In fact, the text is not or is not the same as reality itself. It is because of substantive and epistemological reasons like this that new forms of theological formulation have emerged. The reformulation of theology, of course, does not intend to change the central doctrine of divinity, concerning the Oneness of God which in Islam is called *Tauhid*. Rather, it is an effort to reorient religious understanding both individually and collectively in responding to empirical realities from a divine perspective.

The idea of this theological renewal is filled by two views, namely, first, the views of those who emphasize the review of normative teachings in various classical (*normative reflection*) works of Kalaam (*theology*). *Second*, the views of those who tend to emphasize the need for a reorientation of religious understanding in addressing the empirical reality of modernity (*actual-empirical reflection*). Starting from the tradition of Western thought, the proponents of reforming theology did not recommend changing the doctrine as feared by the first

circles who thought that theological problems in Islam were finished and did not need to be reformed, but only changed the interpretation of them. They recommend that religion be given a new interpretation in order to understand developing humanitarian problems. Thus, religious teachings are not only interpreted as legitimacy in understanding and responding to reality. (Kuntowijoyo, 1991: 286-287).

Efforts to reorient religious understanding in responding to empirical realities according to this divine perspective, Hasan Hanafi came up with his contextual theological thinking. Hasan Hanafi said that theology is not "the science of Godness", as understood in its etymological sense. However, it is a "science of words" (Kalam science). God is impossible to bow down to science. The science of speech is the science of conversational analysis. Not only as pure forms of speech, but also as the context of speech, namely the meaning that refers to the manifestation of faith. (Hanafi, 1991: 7).

Hanafi believes that the form of thought that can bring about social transformation is that which originates from its own reality, not something external to it. Furthermore, Hanafi said that the process of social change basically never takes place without considering events that have occurred in the history of society (tradition). (Hanafi, 1991:

118). Therefore, development that always considers the traditions in society is the only alternative towards social transformation. Reconstruction of traditions that have prevailed throughout history and are part of that reality is an alternative step for the intended transformation process. Theology should be a projection of reality on normative texts. The objectively identified reality is defined quantitatively and the solution is sought through the help or legitimacy of religious texts.

Hanafi thought in this theological renewal is known as "Left Islam" (*Al-Yasar Al-Islami*). This Left Islam thought is a place of struggle for the oppressed, fighting for the eradication of oppression for the oppressed poor, it also fights for equal rights and obligations among all people. In short, the left is a socialistic tendency in Islam. (Shimogaki, 1993: 4)

Hanafi admits that "Left" and "Right" do not exist in Islam itself, but only at the social, political, economic, and historical levels. Therefore, Hanafi asserts that the Islamic left speaks in this context, namely at the level of the Muslims in certain historical realities and in certain social systems. For Hanafi, introducing the terminology of the "Left" and "the people of the Left" is essential to the effort to eradicate all remnants of imperialism.

“Left Islam” was born from full awareness of the oppressed position of the Muslims, to then carry out reconstruction in order to function as a liberating force. As for what is meant by the Left and praised by Hanafi here, it is the Mu'tazilah and the right which he rejects is the Ash'ariyah, and this movement is also called Liberation Theology. (Shimoghaki, 1993: 5)

Hasan Hanafi's contextual theological thinking, which he puts into *Al-Yasar Al-Islami*, contains the main themes of the great Hanafi project, including, *First*, a critique of traditional theology: Hanafi emphasizes the need to change the conceptual set of belief systems (theology) in accordance with the political context that occurs. Traditional theology, Hanafi said, was born in a historical context when the core Islamic belief system, namely the transcendence of God, was attacked by representatives of old sects and cultures. This theology is meant to defend the main doctrine and maintain its purity. Meanwhile, the socio-political context has now changed. Islam suffered various defeats in various battles throughout the colonial period. Therefore, the old conceptual framework, which comes from classical culture, must be changed into a new conceptual framework derived from modern culture. *Second*, Theological Reconstruction. Seeing the weakness of traditional theology,

Hanafi then proposed a theological reconstruction. According to Hanafi, it is possible to function theology into useful sciences for the present, namely by reconstructing and revising, as well as rebuilding the old epistemology into a significant new epistemology. The purpose of this reconstruction is to make theology not just empty religious dogmas, but to become a science of social warriors, which makes traditional faiths have an actual function as the basis of ethics and human motivation. (E. Kusnadinigrat, 1999; 63-65).

3. Contemporary Contextual Theology

There is no doubt that in contemporary times certain theological shifts have occurred which are far more complex than in the past. These changes and shifts can be seen from the emergence of several typologies of theological views among Islam that have emerged and developed in recent times, including:

- a. **Modernist Theology.** No doubt the emergence of modernist theology was driven by the motivation to modernize or advance Muslims. In one way or another, directly or indirectly, the theology of modernism was inspired by and has a strong context with the modernization program launched by the “New Order” government. Among

the leading protagonists of this modernist theology are Harun Nnasution and Nurcholish Madjid. For Harun Nasution, in short, Asy'ariyah theology which is referred to as "traditional theology" is not compatible with the spirit of progress, the theology that is in accordance with Indonesia's modernization program is rational theology, namely mu'tazilah. Meanwhile, Nurcholish Madjid's theology of modernism starts from what he calls a "renewal of thought", which includes "secularization", intellectual freedom, the idea of progress and an open attitude. With this framework, modernization theology basically argues that the modernization and development of Indonesian Muslims must start from theological renewal and other aspects of thought. (Azyumardi, 1999, 52).

b. Transformative Theology.

In a certain discussion, transformative theology can be said to be part of the theology of modernism, in the sense that transformative theology wants to realize the transformation of Muslim society so that it can achieve progress. But on the other hand, transformative theology does not emphasize the renewal of theology itself, as offered by modernist

theology which is considered too "vague". On the other hand, transformative theology views that renewal must start from the grassroots. The main protagonists of this transformative theology are those who are involved in Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), such as M. Dawam Rahardjo, Adi Sasono, and many other NGO activists. (Azyumardi, 1999: 52).

- c. Inclusivism Theology.** The theology of inclusivism overlaps in some respects with the theology of modernism. This theology of inclusivism can also be referred to as "the theology of religious harmony", both within one particular religion and between one religion and another. The central theme of this theology of inclusivism is the development of religious understanding and life that is inclusive, tolerant and respectful of religious pluralism, so that adherents of various religious sects or religions can coexist peacefully. (Azyumardi, 1999 : 53)

Inclusivism in religious attitudes which means that apart from the religion that is embraced there is also truth. Inclusivism is sincerity and honesty with oneself not to judge and accuse others of being heretical, let alone

accusing infidelity. Inclusive theology which means that truth can be anywhere and anytime. Inclusive theology is a religion that is humble, open, open-minded and critical so that it enriches the knowledge and experience of religion and is closer to the path of truth. (Komaruddin, 1999: 47)

Inclusive theology in Indonesia was introduced by Nurcholish Madjid, since the 1970s. Nurcholish Madjid's inclusive theological thinking has relevance to religious plurality in Indonesia, because Islam as a religion of *Rahmatan lil 'alamin* is a religion that highly upholds human values and respects differences. This pluralism was introduced by Cak Nur as a solution to maintain pluralism in Indonesia. According to him, basically pluralism in society or the essence of pluralism, it is not enough just to acknowledge and accept the fact that society is plural, but more fundamentally it must be accompanied by a sincere attitude to accept the reality of pluralism as a positive value, and is God's grace to humans. Pluralism should also not be understood simply as a "negative virtue", only judging from its usefulness to get rid of fanaticism. Pluralism must be understood as "the true

affinity of diversity in the bonds of civilization. Even further, pluralism is a must for the safety of mankind, among others through the mechanism of supervision and balancing it produces. (Nurcholish, 1999: 63)

Those are among the contemporary contextual theological thoughts that the writer can present. However, it is almost certain that new understandings or new theological views will continue to find momentum in these contemporary times. Therefore, pluralism understands, religious practices will also be more diverse. Here, again, tolerance and respect for differences and diversity are required. This is where our religion becomes tested and at the same time more meaningful.

CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded as follows:

1. Contextual theology is a science that discuss about God and his relationship with humans, either based on revelation or reason, and relates to an event. In other words, theology is appropriate to the context. This contextual theology is represented by Hasan Hanafi who appears with the thought of liberation theology.
2. Contemporary contextual theology are theological thoughts that emerged in the contemporary period, which is

marked by the emergence of Modernism theology that appears to modernize or advance Muslims, Transformative theology that wants to realize the transformation of Muslim society so that it can achieve progress, and the theology of inclusivism or the so-called also with the theology of religious harmony. The central theme of this inclusive theology is the development of religious understanding and life that is inclusive, tolerant and respectful toward religious pluralism.

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