

MODERATION OF RELIGION ISLAMIC THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES IN NATION'S LIFE

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Abstract- Violations of freedom of religion/belief (KBB) in Indonesia from year to year still occur such as the destruction of houses of worship, prohibition of activities in the name of religion to rejection of neighbors of different beliefs. The SETARA Institute survey in 2021 stated that 318 cases of KBB violations were recorded, down from 424 in 2020. The background of these violations was due to various factors, including intolerance of religion and belief and lack of understanding of religious moderation from a theological perspective. One of the principles of religious moderation in the Qur'an is to uphold religious differences and respect the worship of other people, as recorded in QS Al-Kafirun: 109/6. The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which the principles of Islamic theological teachings regarding religious moderation, both in terms of religious texts and the process of earthing within the framework of state life. This type of research uses a descriptive-analytic qualitative method with a library research approach related to the concept of religious moderation in Islamic theology, by strengthening factual events in the field. The results of this research prove that Islam teaches religious moderation through the existence of Allah SWT who is perceived as liking goodness, loving the middle and hating excess. From here, humans as servants are not only required to share in liking what Allah likes and vice versa, but more than that, how to cultivate religious moderation as part of religious theological teachings.

Keywords: Tolerance, Religious Moderation, Violation, Islamic Theology

1. Introduction

The term religious moderation has become heavily voiced in the Islamic world in the last two decades, along with a number of conflicts that have occurred in several Muslim-majority countries, especially in the Middle East, the impact of which is not only in surrounding countries, but also across Europe and America. Conflict after conflict experienced by Muslims is known to be inseparable from the involvement of outsiders, especially the western world, which in turn breeds hatred towards foreigners, especially America and its coalitions, but at the same time causes the emergence of Islamophobia against Muslims and their religion. Not even a few of them perceive Islam as a religion of terror, anti-humanity and a series of other negative labels. A number of Islamic experts have concluded that Islamophobia was deliberately created as a political engineering design by anti-Islamic intellectuals, based on the fear of the power of the Islamic religion which they think will rise if left unchecked.¹ Islam as a major religion whose teachings are global has indeed been in the spotlight, because of the strength of its teachings which are rahmatan lil 'alamin and able to penetrate national

¹ <https://www.uui.ac.id/munculnya-islamophobia-di-dunia-barat/> (diakses 29 Juni 2022).

borders, but on the other hand there are religious doctrines of some factions in Islam which tend to be exclusive, intolerant and even anti-Western.

The existence of Islam with the perception of *rahmatan lil alamin* is a religion whose existence in the midst of the world community is able to provide peace and peace as well as love for mankind and the universe. Here the principle of *washyatiyatul Islam* and the application of the teachings of religious moderation in the community will not be challenged, on the contrary, Islam will be a pioneer in grounding religious moderation according to the QS. Al-Baqarah: 143 that Allah has created Muslims as *ummatan wasatan* (middle or moderate/best people) who carry the teachings of religious tolerance. While the perception that Islam is an intolerant religion whose followers find it difficult to accept the presence of other people with different beliefs and even teaches extremism, fundamentalism and terrorism, the concept of religious moderation in Islam is blurred and its teachings are related to peace, love for others, willingness to live side by side or accept one another. the field of beliefs and religious understanding of others becomes utopian. This perception places Islam as a selfish religion, and seems to want to dominate other people's beliefs and of course does not accept differences.

Islam teaches religious moderation departing from the basis of religious theology, namely the Qur'an. There are not a few *kalamullah* in the Qur'an who want humans to see and accept differences as the existence of life. Allah SWT has created a difference, and this is the most beautiful gift for humans and humanity. The difference becomes *sunnatullah* as confirmed in QS. Al-Maidah:48 that it is very easy for Allah to create one entity (one religion and one understanding), but God's will has created different identities as *sunnatullah* laws to test humans which of them is able to present *al-khairat* in this life. If there are humans, including Muslims, rejecting what is imperative in difference, is the same as rejecting God's law on earth, and this is a big sin for the perpetrators. Therefore, to avoid disobeying God's decrees, this study is here to reassess the principles of religious theology in religious moderation in order to restore the misunderstanding of some Muslims about God's instructions whose truth is not based on religious interpretation, but returns to their own religion.

2. Research method

This study uses a qualitative method as a method to conduct a more in-depth study of the phenomenon of religious theology within the framework of religious moderation. According to Moleong², Qualitative methodology is a research method based on written and spoken words from visible actions. Qualitative research attention is more focused on human elements, objects, and institutions, as well as the relationship or interaction between these elements, in an effort to understand an event, behavior, or phenomenon.³

² Lexy, Moleong; *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2007), h. 4

³ Mohamed, Z. M., Abdul Majid, A. H., & Ahmad, N., Tapping new possibility in accounting research, in qualitative research in accounting, Malaysian case. (Kuala Lumpur: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 2010), h. 18.

The author uses a qualitative method with a descriptive approach because he wants to analyze data or descriptions and interpretations of the framing of news results from the construction of information, especially those related to the theological view of Islam in interpreting religious moderation.

3. Results and Discussion

A. Definition of Moderation

Moderation or wasathiyah in Arabic, is taken from the root word "wasat" which has a middle lexical meaning" and has an equivalent meaning with the words tawassuth (middle), i'tidal (fair), and tawazun (balanced). People who apply the principle of wasathiyah can be called wasith. In Arabic too, the word wasathiyah is defined as "the best choice". Whatever words are used, they all imply the same meaning, namely justice, which in this context means choosing a middle ground between various extreme options.⁴

Imam al-Tabari defines the word wasat according to the words of the Arabs as al-Khiyar (choice), so it is said that someone who is elevated in rank among his people or is respected if he is intended as an elect.⁵

The Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) shows the definition of 'moderate' in two levels, namely; (1) reduction of violence, and (2) avoidance of extremes.⁶ So a person is considered moderate or "that person is moderate", the sentence means that the person is being reasonable, mediocre, and not extreme.⁷

Raghib al Asfahani defines washathiyah as a middle point, balanced not too to the right (ifrâth) and not too to the left (tafrîth), which contains the meaning of justice, honor, and equality.⁸

Linguistically, the meaning of al wasathiyah revolves around the meaning of fair, primary, choice/best, and balanced between two opposing positions.

Moderation in the sense of Epistemology is a religious principle that takes the middle position of two excessive and contradictory attitudes between the extreme right (tafrith) and extreme left (ifrath) currents of thought.

Yusuf al-Qaradawi explains the notion of wasathiyah or in another equivalent al-tawâzun, which is an effort to maintain a balance between two opposing sides or ends, so that one end does not dominate and negate the other. Examples of two opposite sides are; spiritualism and materialism, individualism and socialism, realistic and idealistic understanding, and others. Being tawazun or balanced in responding to both by giving a fair and proportionate portion to each side or end of the party without being

⁴ Moderasi Beragama, Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, (Jakarta, Kemenag RI, 2019), h. 15

⁵ Ibnu Jarir al-Tabary, Jamiul Bayan fi Ta'wil al-Quran jilid 2 (Beirut: Muassasah al-Risalah, 2000), h. 8

⁶ <https://kbbi.web.id/moderasi>, diakses 28 Juli 2022

⁷ Moderasi Beragama, Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, h. 15

⁸ Raghib al-Asfahani, *Mufradât Alfâzh al Qur'ân*, (Damaskus: Dar al Qalam, t.th), jilid. II, h. 513.

too much, or not too much and not too little.⁹

Al-Mawardi, the compiler of the commentary on *al-Nukhat wa al-Uyun* gave the notion of *wasatiyah* adapted from the interpretation of Surah al-Baqarah verse 143:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا
(143)

which contains in it three interpretations, namely:¹⁰

1. Choice with their saying "so and so has electability in the midst of his people" if what is desired from that is a high degree.
2. Wasat is in the middle of affairs, so that they behave in the middle in religion, meaning that they are not exaggerating and not reducing, like the Jews who changed the Book of Allah and killed their prophets and denied their Lord. Allah identifies his love with the sentence *wasat* because the most beloved problem is the middle.
3. What is meant by the word *wasat* is 'fair, because 'fair is standing in the middle between more and less positions.

The three interpretations are closely related which revolve around the meaning of fair, wise and balanced.

From several definitions of moderation in Islam as illustrated from the views of the famous ulama, *Wasatiyah* Islam can be seen from three levels of meaning; namely; 1) Theological Level, 2) Ideological Level; and 3) Socio-political level. In this paper, it will be discussed at the theological level, where *Wasatiyah* Islam takes the source of interpretation from *kalamullah* in the Qur'an which is sourced from *lauhil mahfud* in the highest place, but must be grounded in everyday life on earth.

B. Moderation of Islamic Theological Perspectives

It is agreed that *wasatiyatul Islam* is sourced from the Qur'an which is the teaching of Allah SWT to His Messenger and to be conveyed, applied and preserved by his followers until the end of time. Allah's commands regarding religious moderation in the Qur'an include: QS. al-Qasas: 77: "And seek in what Allah has bestowed upon you (happiness) in the hereafter, and do not forget your share of worldly (pleasures) and do good (to others) as Allah has done good to you, and do not do mischief on the earth. Verily, Allah does not like those who do mischief."

The message of this verse, if examined more deeply, there is an order for Muslims to realize moderation in 3 (three) things, namely: 1) Balancing the preparation of acts of worship towards the happiness of the hereafter, but still obtaining worldly pleasures based on the pleasure of Allah; 2) Balancing between giving goodness from the blessings that God has given with efforts to repay God's favors through good deeds to fellow human beings; (3) Balancing between God's creation and maintenance of the universe with the prohibition for humans to make mischief on earth.

⁹ Yusuf al Qaradhawi, *al-Khashâish al-Âmmah li al-Islâm*, (Beirut: Muassasah al-Risalah, 1983) h. 127.

¹⁰ Abu Hasan al-Mawardi, *al-Nukat wa al-'Uyun*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmi, t.th) jilid 1, h. 198,

In this verse, it is implied an acknowledgment of the goodness of Allah SWT, where the Creator perceives himself as the Most Good Substance by preparing his pious servants for happiness in the hereafter without leaving the pleasures of the world, measuring the servant's gratitude for the blessings given through the attitude of sharing with fellow human beings, and of course forbid humans from destroying the earth that has been created and maintained properly by the Most Sustainer. The affirmation of religious moderation from a theological perspective through this verse can be seen from two things:

First; Allah is the Most Good, created the earth and its contents for the benefit of mankind. The goodness of God, in this context, should be used as a motivation by humans to continue and preserve this goodness in the form of *isti'marul Ardh* (prosperity of the earth) while still in the world. *Isti'marul Ardh* is nothing but an absolute human effort carried out to manage the facilities that God has entrusted to the earth for the progress and prosperity of the earth and its contents. Prosperity of the earth, within the framework of his duties as caliph, then humans at least pay attention to some of these principles:¹¹

1. Does not have ultimate power. In essence, ownership and power do not belong to humans because the true owner and ruler is Allah, the creator of the universe. In the hands of Allah are all the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth. Humans only get the mandate to manage it.
2. Act according to the will of the representative. Because he is not the true owner and ruler, then he does not only act according to the will of the party who represents him, namely Allah SWT.
3. Do not exceed the limit. The act of the representative who deviates and exceeds the limits desired by the representative is treason.

Second: Prohibition of doing destruction on earth. Humans as caliphs have the potential to build, and at the same time have the potential to destroy the earth and all its contents, including human beings of the same sex. Sukidi, in his affirmation in the book "Cak Nun's Inclusive Theology", he quoted the statement of E. F. Schumacher, one of the world's development economists, in his book, *A Guide for the Per-Plaxed* stating that the crisis that occurred in this world, departed from the crisis of spirituality and spirituality. The crisis of self-knowledge of the absolute substance, namely God.¹² This means that damage can occur because humans do not care about their monotheism which is implemented in good deeds, because the servant's testimony to the Creator as the only substance to be worshiped is not enough to just perform ritual worship, but also balance it with the command to perform social worship which is manifested in the teachings of tolerance.

¹¹ Husnul Amin, *Memakmurkan Bumi Perspektif Teologi Pendidikan*, Jurnal Tarbiyah Islamiyah RAUDAH Proud To Be Professional, volume 3 no. 2 Desember 2019, h. 9 (<https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/300439-memakmurkan-bumi-dalam-perspektif-teolog-c2c60cf2.pdf>)

¹² Sukidi, *Teologi Inklusif Cak Nun*, (Jakarta: Kompas, 2001), h. 22

C. Tolerance in Islam

The word tolerance found its equivalent in Arabic, namely *al-tasamuh*, which later became the basic concept and character of Islamic teachings that were friendly and respectful of differences, so that Islam deserves to be called the religion of compassion (*din arrahmah wa al-samaha*).¹³ Tolerance by itself is respecting adherents of other religions in worshiping according to the teachings of their religion.

A concrete example of religious tolerance is that a student at school must have the freedom to worship according to the Shari'a he believes in, even though he is in a school environment of a different faith. Therefore, it is not permissible for a Muslim student, for example, to impose the will of a non-Muslim student to attend the worship of Muslim students. This, in the context of religion and the state, is considered religiously intolerant.

Islamic tolerance, which respects the beliefs of others, does not mean allowing its people to mix beliefs with other religions. In Islam, tolerance cannot be justified if it is implemented in the theological realm. Efforts to build tolerance through theological aspects, such as collective prayer, are practices that have been known since the days of ignorance and have since been rejected by the Qur'an through the QS. Al-Kafirun.

Strictly speaking, Surah Al-Kafirun rejects syncretism. As a holy religion, Islamic faith and sharia will not pollute it by mixing other beliefs and sharia. And this is not a form of intolerance, because the realm of tolerance is respecting, not justifying and following. Instead, syncretism is part of the intolerance of religious adherents to their own religion. Because the perpetrators of syncretism, as if they no longer believe in the truth of their own religion. While religion is belief.¹⁴

D. Deviation of Faith versus Religious Moderation

The spread of extreme ideologies or violent sects is still found in a number of Muslim countries, including in Indonesia. Several violations of freedom of religion and belief (KBB) in Indonesia in recent years are still happening, although they fluctuate from year to year. The SETARA Institute survey in 2021 stated that KBB violations in Indonesia were recorded at 318 cases, down from 424 in 2020. This violation cannot be separated from the spread of

There are several reasons behind the spread of extreme ideologies, among others: The existence of truth claims on themselves and their groups so that they are called to straighten out the understanding, attitudes and behavior of people who are considered heretical; participate in certain extreme sects with the aim of resisting a regime in a country that is considered unjust and whose leadership is contrary to religion or *tha'gut*; some are called to fight in the form of force action against the threat of external expansion, both from the possibility of armed threats and wars of thought.

¹³ Lihat Tholhah Hasan, *Pendidikan Multikultural sebagai Opsi Penanggulangan Radikalisme*, (Malang: Lembaga Penerbitan Universitas Islam Malang, 2016), h. 31.

¹⁴ Ahmad Syarif Yahya, *Ngaji Toleransi* (Jakarta: PT Elex Media Komputindo, 2017), hal 1-5

A number of these reasons, if returned to the teachings of Islamic theology, it will be found that there is a wrong religious understanding, because God's teachings in the Qur'an regarding truth only exist on the side of Allah not on the servant. In QS. Al-Kahf: 29 it is emphasized that "The truth comes from your Lord; so whoever wants (to believe) should believe, and whoever wants (disbeliever) let him disbelieve". This verse clearly teaches humans that the truth only comes from Allah and not on creatures, so that no human has the right to claim the truth. The task of humans is to convey, and in the delivery it is not allowed to do it by force, QS. Al-Baqarah: 256.¹⁵

From a number of verses previously mentioned, it can be concluded that the teachings of religious moderation in Islam are sacred texts that come from the sky,¹⁶ and everything that comes from the sky (sourced from Allah) must be good. The goodness of Allah SWT which is manifested in the perfection that surrounds Him, including the sacred texts that were revealed, then there is no doubt that everything that comes from Him must be perfect, so it does not require correction from humans. On the basis of this thought, the human task related to religious moderation is to ground these sacred texts according to the will of their owners. The big mistake of humans regarding religious moderation from a theological perspective is that there are parties who deliberately mix up the maqashid (purpose) of the sacred text on the one hand and human will on the other. In fact, as the holder of the mandate of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, then the task of humans is only to convey what is taught by the maqashid Qur'an, namely to do good to humans (regardless of ideological background, religious understanding, etc.), just as God has done good to humans.

Differences in ideology or even differences in religious understanding or interpretation are *sunnatullah* that must be accepted fairly, without blaming other people's beliefs. Muhammad Rashid Rida explained that Allah SWT. Indeed requires the existence of *ikhtilâf* between humans by making them in a condition that is ready to accept these differences. The level of readiness between one another of course has different levels, depending on the knowledge, knowledge, opinions, and feelings they have.¹⁷

3. Conclusion

Religious moderation in Islam is *kalamullah* which is summarized in the Qur'an as a divine theology that must be believed and practiced by mankind. As a theology, the truth is returned to Allah, and not to humans.

The affirmation of religious moderation from a theological perspective cannot be separated from two things: First, the affirmation that Allah is the Most Good One,

¹⁵Lihat Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Juz'iy al-Kalaby, *al-Tashil li Ulu'm al-Tanzil*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 1995), Jilid 1, h. 132.

¹⁶Meminjam istilah *Ulumul Qur'an* bahwa salah satu tahapan turunnya Alqur'an adalah diturunkan dari Batiul Izzah (langit dunia) kepada Nabi Muhammad Saw, baik melalui perantaraan malaikat Jibril maupun secara langsung ke dalam hati sanubari Nabi Muhammad SAW. Lihat Abdul DJalal, *Ulumul Qur'an*, (Surabaya, Dunia Ilmu, 2000), h. 56.

¹⁷Rasyid Ridha, *Tafsîr al-Mannâr*, (Kairo: Dar al-Mannar, 1984), juz. 11, h. 194

created the earth and its contents for the benefit of humans. The goodness given by God motivates humans to preserve the goodness by prospering the earth. Second, the prohibition of doing destruction on the earth, because any violation or destruction will be contrary to the purpose of its creation, namely to build civilization and continue life.

Moderation of religion from the perspective of Islamic theology, even though the source is from the sky, but it is a must for humans to ground it, provided that the goals of its practice are based on the will of the goals of the sacred text, not according to human will.

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