REDUCTIVE CONSTRUCT OF RELIGION IN THE FRAME OF FUNDAMENTALISM AND SECTARIAN THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION

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Abstract: *This article elucidates contradictory religious arguments. Religion substantively carries messages of salvation and guidance of truth from God. But when it is practiced by humans, substantive religious messages were reduced and replaced with contradictory religious expressions that eradicated the substantive messages of religion itself. Conflict and violence in the name of religion is a real phenomenon that the substantive religious teachings lost its essential message of religion. An important question to be answered in this article is how does the process of religious reduction occur if it is reviewed from the character of theological interpretation produced by theologians? A literature study of this article about the tension, conflict, and violence in the name of religion shows that the reduction of the face of religion is due to the product of sectarian, fanatical, and untolerant. These findings strengthen previous studies about the influence of theological patterns towards religious attitudes of their adherents.*

Abstrak: *Artikel ini mengurai wajah agama yang kontradiktif. Agama secara substantif membawa pesan-pesan keselamatan dan petunjuk kebenaran dari Tuhan. Namun ketika dipraktikkan oleh manusia, tidak jarang pesan-pesan substantif agama itu tereduksi dan justru digantikan dengan ekspresi keagamaan yang kontradiktif sehingga menghapus pesan-pesan substantif agama itu sendiri. Konflik dan kekerasan atas nama agama merupakan fenomena nyata bahwa realisasi ajaran-ajaran agama yang keliru justru mengakibatkan hilangnya pesan esensial agama. Pertanyaan penting yang hendak dijawab dalam artikel ini adalah bagaimana proses reduksi agama terjadi jika ditnjau dari karakter tafsiran teologis yang dihasilkan oleh para teolog? Kajian literatur terhadap fenomena ketegangan, konflik, dan kekerasan atas nama agama menunjukkan bahwa terjadinya reduksi wajah agama disebabkan oleh produk interpretasi teologis yang bercorak sektarian, fanatis, dan intoleran. Temuan dalam artikel ini memperkuat penelitian-penelitian sebelumnya tentang pengaruh corak teologi terhadap sikap keagamaan pemeluknya.*

Kata kunci: *Interpretasi Agama; Sektarianisme Teologi; Fundamentalisme Agama; Konflik Keagamaan; Kekerasan Agama.*

Introduction

Religions in the sense of God's words to men contains the instructions of life for the goodness of men. The Lord chose the servants He desired to carry out His trust and to speak His words to all mankind in which this chosen man is known as the "Prophet" or "Apostle". In the Holy Quran it is mentioned that Allah (SWT) spoke directly to the Prophet or His Messenger. God's word is then referred to as word or revelation. At first, the authority to convey the word or revelation was only to the Prophet or Messenger who is guided directly by God.[1] The companions of the Prophet who memorize and record the teachings of the Prophet then collect the teachings until it manifests into a text that can be read and used as a guidance.

In the early days of the development of a religion, there was almost no difference in the way people understand the religious teachings, and the Apostle controlled the understanding and practices of his followers. Consequently, conflicts caused by differences in religious comprehension almost never occur. In contrast, problems began to arise when the Prophets and Apostles had passed away so that those who conveyed the teachings of religion were the companions and followers of the Prophet who were not directed by God.[2] Thus, the understanding and interpretation of religious teachings have been diversified.

Differences in understanding and interpretation of religion are prone to tension and conflict. This condition often causes the attachment of the people[3] or the potential birth of conflict.[4] This difference is an embryo of

division and hostility among believers, in one religion and across religions. Differences that are not based on the spirit of tolerance and pluralism would lead to the conflict and religious violence.

The reductive construct of religion is a religious argument that has undergone reduction and impress the contradictions of religion itself. If the substance and originality of religion is a set of good instructions from God, then in its reductive construct, religion presents itself as a spreader of the conflict and violence in which it is known as religious violence. Religious reductive constructs can be caused by fanaticism of religious truth and fanaticism of religious communities. On the one hand the fanaticism of religious truth is reflected in the belief that religion itself is the most truthful religion among other religions. On the other hand, the community fanaticism is characterized by an attitude of appreciation that is solely directed at people in the community. This community is likely equal but they lack respect and posses less empathy towards people in other religious communities. This article will describe how the process of religious reduction occurs, which at first it is a set of good instructions from God into contradictory 'designations'.

Religion, Theology, and *Kalām*

Prior to discuss the process of religious reduction, there are several important terms to explain. These terms are religion, theology, and *kalām*.

In modern European languages, Religion is a term that refers to all concepts of belief in God and divine nature such as spiritual form or transcendental things. The term Religion also refers to the nuclei or bodies that display the concepts of divinity.[5] Religion is often defined as institutions and membership bodies where members together regularly to worship and accept a set of teaching concepts.[6] An Islamic theologian like al-Jurjani defines religion (*al-Dīn*) as the rules of God that call on the intelligent creatures to accept anything that comes from the Messenger, so that it turns out an obeyed sharia.[7] While from Sanskrit, the word Religion comes from the words '*A*' which means 'No' and '*Gama*' which means chaotic. Thus, the word Religion means not chaotic, and orderly.[8]

The word Religion in this article is defined as doctrine, rule, and norm of God as in Scripture, where its execution has trigger the emergence of certain groups and institutions. Thus, Islam is an institution of Islamic doctrines or regulations and norms, and Christianity is an institution of Christian doctrines or rules and norms.

The term Theology comes from the Greek *Theos* meaning God and *Logos* which means conversation or consideration.[9] Theology is often

defined as Reflection on the natural being of God which is the thought of the nature and form of God'.[10] As a discipline in the West, theology has been accepted as a rational norm or description that tells the story of God.[11] Theology is a methodical attempt to understand and interpret the truth of revelation. To this end, theology uses the resources of ratios aided by the science of history and philosophy.[12] In terms of terms, theology' is more specifically derived from the Church, although previously theology was a separated discipline. In the context of the Church, theology not only means the talks of God but it also contains the praise for God.[13]

The term Theology' comes from the Christian World which means Divine Science' which discusses the existence of God, His attributes and praises of God based on ratios. Therefore, both the interpretation of revelation and the doctrine of Scripture are part of theology although the role of ratios in this context is only as a reinforcement to rationalize the concept of The Godhead. Theologians, as Thomas Aquinas once characterized, begin with revelation to articulate their religious concepts, whereas rationality and empirical considerations are only used as reinforcements to ensure the existence of God.[14]

In Islamic religious nomenclature, theology' often matched its meaning with ʿIlm al-kalām. The word *kalām* means conversation or dialectical. The content of the conversation or dialectic revolves around the concept of God, proofs of God's existence through ontological and cosmological arguments, the relationship between God and the world, god's ethics and justice, free will and predestination, religious language, and the relationship between reason and revelation.[15] In the tradition of Islamic thought, ʿIlm al-kalām' is a science that discusses the basics of religion, whether regarding the Godhead or belief in it using the proposition ʿAql and the *Naql* proposition.

The term *kalām* is also associated with the birth of religious sects or sects in the field of creed, which specifically appeared in the post-leadership of Alī b. Abi Ṭālib. There are at least five (5) *kalām* schools in Islam e.g., Khawārij, Murjiʿah, Jabarīyah, Qadarīyah, Muʿtazilah and Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāʿah (Ashʿarīyah and Māturidīyah). These theological schools have their own concepts reinforced by the *naql* proposition (argument of revelation or the text of Scripture) and the proposition of ʿAql (argument of reason and ratio).

Almost the whole content of the discussion of ʿIlm al-kalām concerns with the Godhead so that ʿIlm al-kalām is often equated with theology. The equalization of theology with ʿIlm al-kalām is due to the similarity of the object of his study both of which examine The Lord and the similarity

of methods in which case both disciplines apply the proposition of *ʿAql* and the *Naql* proposition as their foundations. The term *kalām* follows the use of the Greek word in philosophy known as Logos, as a term used for the science of thought. Theologians are often referred to as *Ahl al-Kalām* or *Mutakallimūn*.[16]

In terms of the method of discussion, there is no difference between theology and *kalām*, whereby they utilize the proposition of reason and the proposition of revelation. In contrast, the difference is located in the object of study being relevant to the studied religions. For instance, the Islamic Theology considers the 'Word of God' as the 'Word of God' and the only monotheistic concept of God , but in the Christian Theology the 'Word of God' is the 'words of Jesus' or Jesus.

Relationship between Religion and Theology

By defining the main terms above, it is important to explain the relationship between religion and theology or *kalām*. Religion is a set of doctrines on matters relating to God, rules, and laws that further become a major factor for the formation of certain religious institutions. If it is said to be Christianity then it means an institution in which Christians are made up of Christians, as well as other religions. The role of theology or *kalām* is to explain the teachings of religion rationally to strengthen the beliefs of Muslims.

If the given analogy is sound, then the face of religion that appears into human life is greatly influenced by the theological patterns embraced by the Theologian or *Mutakallim*. A religious reflection would be traditional or orthodox while the theology it embraces is traditional theology and orthodoxy. Likewise, the religious type of a person could be conservative, rational, or liberal, and it is due to the pattern of theology he or she embraces. Theology does influence and shape a person's religious character. Theology is neither God nor is religion itself, but it is merely a reelection or interpretation of religion. Religion -as it is reflected in Scripture- is fixed and definite, whereas theology in contrast is not fixed, and it tends to change following the historical setting of human life. Unlike religion, theology would change in every place and age.

The implementation of religious teachings is reflected in the theological pattern of its adherents. Theology always influences the course of religion in its struggle with the human condition in history. Whether religion would tend to be inclusive, accommodative and *raḥmatan li-al-ʿĀlamīn* (mercy to the universe) for every time, or perhaps religion is only in the process of its birth showing good for the universe, while in its journey it could be an

oppressor, the answer depends on the pattern of theological tendencies of its adherents.

Through the theological approach, there are three important indicators among others: First, the attitude of theology and theologians towards religion, both religion in the tradition of theological thought and third, the deconstruction of theological thoughts. These three indicators are expected to explain the existence of religious theological perspectives.

> "(In an effort to understand religion) philosophers start from the world of experience and argue with reason to come to God so that they may know creation. While theologians depart from God as He has revealed Himself. While the method of research in theology (only) serves to ensure the existence of God. Theologians accept principles (religion or belief) as (a thing) that have been revealed and consider the object of their study with the consideration of revelation. Whereas philosophers understand the principles (of religion) through reason and consider their object not as revealed, but as an object that can be understood through reason. For example, philosophers argue that God is the Creator, just as theologians accept the fact that God is the creator. But the philosopher's knowledge of God as creator comes from rational conclusions, while theologians accept the knowledge of God as creator from revelation."[17]

Thomas Aquinas' view above describes the characteristics of philosophers and theologians in the way they understand religion. There are two main characteristics of a theologian in approaching his religion; first, to know God theologians use revelation as the basis of their epistemology. Second, religious principles and religious expression depart from their textual comprehension of revelation.

In the first characteristic, a theologian uses revelation as the basis of his theology to come to the knowledge of God. A theologian believes that revelation is information from God that contains all things which are metaphysical and yet to be known by men. A theologian also holds that revelation is a means prepared by God to solve all problems that man cannot solve. The implication of this understanding is the birth of the understanding that Religion is a path or guidance that has been determined by God for the salvation of man. In addition, the existence of the Prophets as presenters of God's religion to man is actually His provision so that His teachings and guidance reach man.

In the second characteristic, the religious principles of a theologian stand on his textual understanding of revelation. As Aquinas said above, a theologian considers the object of his study with the approach of the proposition of the holy text (revelation). When faced with a problem, theologians immediately refer and seek the answer to revelation. Like

a popular dictionary, theologians make revelation as the key of answer. However, when revelation is not enough to answer the problem, theologians would use their reasons to strengthen the proposition of revelation.[18]

In the realm of theology, especially in response to the word or text of revelation, there is a tendency to stagnate. The French philosopher Maurice Blondel -as quoted by Bahtiar- once stated that what animates theology is the act of believing. Due to it departs from faith, the emphasis of belief with the principle of without reserve always accompanies the theologian's understanding of his Scriptures, which often results in a theologian clinging more to the sacred text rather than giving a liberal interpretation of the sacred texts.

In the tradition of Islamic theological thought, it is noted that the Asyariyah are known as those who cling to the text of scripture. They are not very liberal in interpreting the texts of Scripture. On the other hand, the Muʿtazilah are well known as liberals and quite rational in interpreting the texts of revelation. From this small fact, the chance of stagnation of the role of ratio would occur in the Ashʿarīyah group. Thereby, clinging to the text of revelation and ignoring the creativity of reason could lead to the results of one's thinking seems stiff.

Reductive Construct in the Confines of Theological Interpretation

Religious reductive construct is a change in the appearance of religion in the society from what is supposed to reflect the messages of kindness to a terrible scourge. Religious reductive construct is the loss of message and impression of religious goodness because it is replaced by a process of negative reconciliation caused by theological interpretation of religion that is contradictory to the message of religion. Meanwhile, the theological interpretation is a description of the understanding of religious teachings produced by religious or theologians who are all humans and it depends on the capacity or quality of the theologians. If we witness a person preaching his religion to others, whether in one religion or across religions in ways that deviate from the messages of religious goodness, then this is where the process of religious reduction takes place.

The process of religious reduction is often found in almost all religions. We still remember how Christian religious resistance in America fought against the modernism, the biblical criticism and the theory of evolution. Fundamentalists often claim to be the ones who should teach Darwin's theory of evolution in schools.[19] The movement was originally "Biblical" and anti-evolutionary Protestantism which included the takeover of religious groups, the spread over radio and television, the development of

congregations (church communities).[20] We still remember how Christian conservatives in America in the 1920s quarelled against the tendencies of modernists and liberals who criticized the Bible.[21] Moreover, David Parker's research also mentions that fundamentalists in Australia are wary of the growth of modernism. The group views modernism as a threat to the stability of the church and the development of Scripture in Australia as elsewhere.[22]

On the other hand, fanaticism to a theological understanding has contributed to the process of reducing the appearance of religions. For example, the extreme Presbyterian Church in Scotland. They believe that there is no church other than their church. Their religion is the true religion of God, the true religion of Christ, the true Christian religion, and the perfect religion of God.[23] It is through fanaticism that they impose their religious teachings to other people.[24] It is in this particular context that they have a duty to save those outside their circle. They are committed to preaching to those who do not embrace this belief..[25]

This fanaticism often causes clashes among the churches. For example, the fiercest clash occurred between the Presbyterian Church of England and the Independent Church or often called the "Congregational Nonconformists" (Congregational Anti-Compromise) in 1691. As a result of the feud, the religious people are completely segregated, and they are unable to establish a friendly, harmonious cooperation. In the reality, the border tribes of feudal barbarism were competing, hostile, as well as conflicting sects.[26] This feud is often referred to as the "negative interaction" which until now still occurs oftenly.[27]

Persistence in holding a type of theological understanding has given birth to the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism. So-called fundamentalists are those who are militant in the fight against the liberal theology of the churches, or refusing various changes in cultural values and norms, such as those associated with human secularism. They are anti-modernism, fighting the theology of modernism and fighting the theory of evolution.[28] Fundamentalists are a subspecies of evangelicalism. Fundamentalism is not only conservative in religion, but conservative in its willingness to take a stand and fight back.[29] Fundamentalists' hatred against Darwin's theory of evolution is the cause of the growth of anti-intellectual attitudes, including in this context anti-science and anti-rationalism. According to Marsden,

> "They do not want to accept the basic assumptions and conclusions of new science and philosophy," so they would therefore "strike back at everything that smells modern such as high criticism, evolutionism,

social gospel, and any rational criticism."[30]

In this context, fundamentalist theologians from the Presbyterian Church such as J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937) once referred to be liberal and idolater for rejecting the truth of literal doctrines. In addition to Machen, another Presbyterian theologian such as William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925) made a campaign against the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution in schools and colleges.[31]

Religious people with fundamentalist theology consider themselves to be people who carry out missions. Their mission is to gain new members and communities. They often judge the worship of other religions as devil-worship. When they carried out missions in Korea in which case many people embrace the Gautama Buddhism, Presbyterians considered Buddhism to be a teaching that believed so much in many demons so that the influence of evil outweighed the influence of good.[32] Worship in Buddhism is also seen as "devil-worship."[33] Likewise, when judging Eskimos as devils' worshipers until a missionary V. C. Gambell introduced Christianity in the area.[34]

Different mission directions are often a trigger for conflict. Cases in Canada such as those once spoken by Edith L. Blumhofer show a difference in mission purpose among missionaries. Presbyterian missionaries aimed to create a self-government in the indigenous church. Religious institutions want integration between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.[35] Research conducted by Neal Krause and friends at Presbyterian Church in America mentions negative interactions among elders and influences on lay people in the church. Conflicting churches result in congregations finding other churches to worship, or finding other, more meaningful social networks. They feel church conflicts could threaten their personal identity.[36] Fanaticism in this context could certainly disturb peace in religion. When fanaticism becomes one of the factors that could disturb peace in religion, fanaticism has reduced the religion itself, which should be good for everyone.

The phenomenon of expression of theological understanding that causes unrest in religion also occurs in Islam. The calmness in practicing Islam is disturbed by the phenomenon of *Takfiri* or labeling and punishing *Kafir* against fellow Muslims who are differently understood. In the past, this action was often done by the *Khawārij* from the *Muḥakkimah* sect. Even in its history, they did not stop there but continued with wars and killings against people who differed from them, even though they were still in one religion.

The *takfiri* phenomenon often occurs until now and has disrupted

the fraternal relations of Muslims.[37] According to Muzadi, *Takfiri* is a thought that denies others who are beyond his beliefs.[38] Khalid Basalamah considers *takfiri* behavior very dangerous and therefore it is strictly forbidden to punish others as infidels' simply because of different religious understandings. Shaykh Abdul Aziz b. Baz mentioned that those who like to convert people are not from the ahlul al-sunnah because the habit of converting others is the habit of the Khawarij. Khawarij convicted the perpetrator of the maxim as an infidel, while ahlu al-sunnah did not refer to the perpetrator of the maxim as an infidel and emphasized the punishment. The Khawarij was fought by Ali b. Abi Talib and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

In addition to the phenomenon of *Takfiri*, the expression of theological understanding that causes unrest is also in the form of broadcasting or proselytizing that contains pros and cons in society. In Indonesia, in the past few years, this way of preaching was carried out by the banned FPI organization which conducted raids on places that are considered as immoral nests such as cafes,[39] as well as some nightlife venues that are considered places of liquor circulation. Perhaps the purpose of the FPI to carry out such raids is to ensure the absence of deviant behavior in the midst of society, and in this particular context some people agree with them. However, when the way that is carried out is hard, rough, and uncontrolled, then it could disturb the peace of society so that it is contrary to the initial purpose of religion.

Religious fanfare because of the expression of certain theological understandings as depicted above has clearly polished the image of religion with an antagonistic polish. The expression of theological understanding has created a space of stigma on religion so that the image of religion seems contradictory. The religious image appears violent and horrible so that some people might be afraid of it. When all these negative impressions attach to religion, the process of religious reduction has taken place. The reduced religion is due to a theological understanding of a deviant religion. Religion is silent, but theological understanding is moving. The holy texts in Scripture of religions are silent and instructive, but the theological interpretation of them is more welcoming and touching to the realm of the human mind so that it is more influential than the silent texts.

If the theological interpretation that touches men is positive to form a noble mind set, then that is the expectation towards religion. But if the theological interpretation instills a hard, violent, and radical mind set, then it would threaten the future of religion. The dominance of bad theological interpretation would bury the value of religious substance. People would

judge religion as a spreader of hatred, conflict, and war, and they are prone to have trauma and allergy when they mention religion because they think that religion is the advocate of violence.

Criticism of Theology

Fanaticism and theological fundamentalism have resulted in serious religious problems. Hostility and conflict among believers that lead to religious violence emerges as an inevitable phenomenon.[40] Almost all religions have bitter experiences related to conflicts between their adherents or conflicts with other religions. In this context theology is in the spotlight and being subjected to criticism from scholars. With many casualties, religious people are required to reevaluate their interpretations in order to prevent their followers from hostility and conflict between religious people.

A theologian should have wisdom for saving himself from the trap of truth absolutism and more open to the reality of diverse religious understanding. Religious scholars should realize that both the metaphysical existence of God and His messages constitute a transcendent existence and they are too abstract to be interpreted let alone depicting in the frame of empirical human reality.

Experts variously criticize the thought of theologians or religious people because it is alleged to be the trigger for fanaticism, fundamentalism, and sectarianism. Komaruddin Hidayat reminds that "the power of human reason is too small to be able to present the image of God and his sacred messages in profane human life."[41] This should make theologians aware that the product of thought and understanding is not absolutely its truth. The limitations of human reason in interpreting God and His teachings could control the desire of the ulama or theologian to convert his truest understanding and strive for others to follow him.

Frithjof Schuon criticizes theology by calling the existence of a sentimental metaphysical character in theology has distorted the straight path. The character of sentimental metaphysics encourages theologians not to care about the differences in aspects and perspectives. Theology works based on rigid data, and sentimental views in a way, and thus leading to a sort of wrong thinking.[42] Thereby, denying the diversity of viewpoints and addressing such diversity with certain sentiments implying the absence of objectivity on theologians.

Schuon also attacks the weakness of theologians who had described a high and unattainable existence. According to Schuon, the unfathomable mysteries -such as God- posed by theologians are sometimes nothing more

than manifestations of their metaphysical inadequacies, or they refer to divine subjectivity which is completely inexhaustible. He also argues that the thesis on "Mystery" is simply an unwarranted affirmation used to mask theological contradictions so that it creates an undeniable truth.[43] In this context, Schuon lacks the authenticity of the image of Supreme Being described by theologians in each religion.

Schuon's second critique aims at the prototype of a theological paradigm that tends to simplify something that can't be described. This, according to Schuon, could be due to a discrepancy between the sublimes' of theologians who have strong tendency to simplification and the idea of virtual at the level of Divinity, or the idea of Divine relativity.[44] In this case, it can be understood when the prototype of thinking pursued by theologians is a simplification of existence. Theologians would never be able to describe the metaphysical existence of the Supreme Being. Schuon's third criticism of theology is that the theologian's way of thinking is the wrong way of thinking as he claims, "Theology -by allowing itself to be contentious because it becomes sentimental metaphysics- is considered to have veered a straight path. Because it does not care about the differences in aspects and viewpoints of things, theology must work based on rigid data, the solution of which can only be done by getting rid of the false rigidity. The way it works is based on sentimental views, and it's a wrong thought.[45]

Schuon's criticism of theology is understandable because the paradigm of simplification of something big and hard to describe could mislead people. Therefore, the authenticity of the image of Divinity or the form of Supreme Being is doubtful. Theologians possess rigid and exclusive nature so that they are less acceptable for differences. In the frame of pluralism, Schuon wants to open the horizons of thinking of theologians who tended to be sentimental, rigid, and exclusive to be brought to an inclusive and pluralist understanding.

The tradition of theological thought has a big and serious problem. Relativity often appears beautiful and pleasant, but on the other hand it would be a serious threat. There are many names of God such as Yahweh, trinity, Brahman and so on. Which God istruly God? Eventually, it might be wise to consider a wisdom saying that the names are means to know the real God. The recognition of good religiousness in this kind of divinity is not merely stopped at the formal conceptions of theology, but further it penetrates the level of essence that is located outside those formal conceptions. The recognition of divinity that only reaches the formal conceptions of theology would result in a self-suffocating, for those conceptions -to borrow Schuon's

term above- are mere simplifications, even for the author a narrowing and not the real reality of the original reality of the Sacred, The Highest, the Greatest and the Most Perfect.

Regardless of the above religious language problems, other problems that can be found in the tradition of theological thought are the subjective claims of truth and rationalism. In every religion, there would be rational efforts conducted by theologians who persistently convey the word of God. With the persistence of a scholar, a pastor or a monk in explaining his religious teachings to the audience, where these explanations are sometimes also accompanied by protrusions , exaltation and claims of religious truth itself. However, we rarely find their interpretations truly rational and independent. A theologian's rational interpretation of his Scriptures is only for the purpose of strengthening the truth of his Scriptures. The theologians strive to interpret with ratio and assume that the interpretation is rational when the goal is to strengthen the Scriptures. This is what Hidayat later referred to as a behavior with double standards in understanding the Scriptures.

According to Hidayat, in understanding Scripture, one tends to use a double standard, which is to think in a capacity and based on human experience but directed to an object that is believed, which is beyond the reach of reason and sense. In other words, he thinks in the framework of faith, and he believes while trying to seek support from his thoughts. In this condition also according to Hidayat there is a dimly lit area . It is dim because in the attitude of "*Iman*" there are things that should be taken for granted. Under this situation the '*ilm al-kalām*' or Islamic Theology emerged. According to Hidayat, the word Science denotes the existence of reasoning activities, while *kalām* or the Word of God indicates that the object he studied is directly related to the nature and activity of God that is not rationally explainable. Therefore, *kalām* science is the "Reason of Faith" which is the reasoning of God's Word to serve faith or faith in God. Thus, although reason has sought to understand and interpret God's Word, theologians would ultimately submit to their faith especially when they are confronted with God's words that are irrational."[46]

If the tradition of theological thought has a vision and mission of religious rationalization, then is there any rationality in that religion? This question challenges theologians. Isn't theology impressive from the beginning and left a fundamental question full of mysteries that is "*Theos* and logical?" Or by other expressions is there anything about a metaphysical God that is logical? Is it just a great diversity that has occurred throughout the history of humanity on Earth?

Human reason has weaknesses and limitations to understand the existence of God comprehensively, let alone the existence of heaven and hell and the resurrection of humans after death. The human mind is only capable to capture everything that is rational, empirical, and real. In this context, theology was once overwhelmed by the surge of secularism and atheism. The peak of rationality results in man denying the metaphysical reality in which the discussion of God's existence resides in this territory. When the metaphysical reality is denied, religion has been reduced in such a way so that the position of religion is at a low level and marginalized from the human mind. Furthermore, secularism appears both as a discourse and an ideology of movement that can mobilize the masses to oppose and destroy religion. Bert F. Breiner once claims that secularism control the authority of certain institutions to develop its secularism wing.[47]

Theologians' attitudes are often unfair in the face of the turmoil of humanitarian rationalism. Religious repression by claiming infidel, irreligious and apostate is often aimed at those who doubt or do not believe in metaphysical or unseen existence. Theologians often regard the turmoil of rationalism as a great threat to religion. This is a cause of the contradiction between reason and revelation or between science and faith. Theologians should be able to deal with the turmoil of rationalism with the maturity of religious attitudes rather than destroying them. If theologians too often impose transcendental visions and missions to silence the turmoil of human rationalism, then what would happen is the imposition of the relativity of religious truth.

To rationalize the teachings of religion to the community as its adherents, theologians encourage believers to believe, trust, and obey without reserve. For theologians, the first thing believers should possess is an attitude of trust and not doubting nor denying. Even under certain circumstances, rationalism in its dubious form is a prohibition. Believing first and thinks later rather than otherwise is a theological principle in religion. Would such a religious character be a faith with full awareness? Doesn't such a motto indicate coercion? It is possible that such a faith is a pseudo-faith because it is the result of the compulsion of theologians. Some people are religious without full awareness in the sense of departing from the freedom of thought and the height of their contemplation to arrive at the understanding of the God they believe in. Thus, the concept of God and everything related to Him is purely departing from his experience and understanding so that it constitutes a pure faith.

There is one important question: is it possible that faith, belief, and religious awareness are truly pure from the individuals themselves? Could

it be that religious awareness is really born out of the result of deep human contemplation so that it could be an expression of the human nature and instinct that tends to be religious? What often happens is that religion is a guideline that is passed down through generations. Following theological means, religion is revealed rather than sought. Religions shape people, and it is not the other way around. A father can serve as a theologian for his children to introduce and oblige his children to a particular religious worship.

Another phenomenon related to theologian behavior that often influences human religious practice is the apologies of theologians. A theologian tends to defend the truth of his religion, especially when he is attacked. He would also continue to provide resistance and counterattack against outsiders who quarrel against his religion. It happens because every religion has theology. Claims of partial truth in every religion often cause a theologian to criticize and blame the teachings of other religions. Therefore, the vision that needs to be internalized in the mindset of theologians is the awareness of pluralism, where theological truth is not the truth of God, but only the interpretation of man's Scripture which is greatly influenced by the theologian's space, time, and capacity. Theology is neither God nor religion. Theology is just an interpretation towards both of them. Thus, both theology and theologians are merely willingness while the ultimate truth resides in God alone. In this context Nurcholish Madjid once asserts that the authority establishes everything, including the law only on God, while anything that comes from man -such as theological interpretation- should be taken as a voluntary one.[48]

From Sectarian Theology to Pluralist-Inclusive Theology

It has been explained above that the fanatical and sectarianist interpretation of theology towards religion has polished the face of religion into antagonistic and counterproductive to be called the teaching of God that contains the universal good. The fundamental problem of religion in the confines of fanatical and sectarianist theological thought often leads to the religious exclusivism of its adherents. This in turn often creates the attachment of the ummah and often leads to horizontal conflicts between believers.

The constraints of fanatical and sectarian theology often direct to the attachment of the people. According to Amin Abdullah, almost all religious social observers agree that theological thoughts often aim to the attachment of the people. Inescapable attachment and compart mentality is possible. Like the concept of Human which is universal, but then it is segregated by various Languages and Skin Color. It is historically an

inescapable blessing. Theology should not be uncertain in reference to a particular religion. Loyalty to one's own group, high commitment and dedication and the subjective use of language, namely language as a doer—instead of an observer—are inherent features of theological forms of thought.[49]

Why then do the sectarian theology and its fanatical adherents often cause major religious problems and lead to conflict? Abdullah explains that the theological thought is characterized by a level of Personal Commitment which is very sensitive to the teachings of religion embraced by one. Religion is a matter of life and death (Ultimate Concern) that cannot be easily shifted like a person wears and changes his clothes. Adherents of certain religions would maintain the teachings of the religion they embraced diligently, so that they are willing to make all-out sacrifices if necessary. Religion demands complete participation and loyalty from all its followers. Likewise, the language used by believers is the language of a doer or player (actor) rather than the language of an observer or more not the language of a researcher who comes from outside (a spectator). In this way, a religious person is always involved (and fully involved) in its entirety and totally'.[50]

Thus, a theologian is prone to pay less attention to external conditions in the sense of other thoughts outside the frame of his religion and theology. A partial sense of personal loyalty, accepting partial truth to partial religious attitude as well. All this causes a theologian to partially drop his favor on his own religion instead of taking side with the universal truth.

What we call as partial personal fidelity is actually a consequence of a theologian being faithful only to his own religion, but not aiming his loyalty to the truth, whatever form it may look like, and wherever the truth comes from. The truth that he preserve in his mind could only be a partial truth, so that it is less recognizable the truth of other religions. At the end, this character represents the tendency of religious truth exclusivism,[51] in which many religious cases, the exclusivism of religious truth often gives birth to expressions of thought, action, and movement that threaten the future of human religions themselves.

By studying the pattern of theological thoughts and its effects, we think that the idea of theological deconstruction should emerge. Some theologians perform with fanatical tendencies and drop their loyalty to partial fidelity rather than the universal fidelity, accepting the partial truth of his religion and theology but not the universal truth, they submit to the partial truth of their religion and theology but not to the universal truth, and they establish affiliation only to their own religion and its theological

system while ignoring other truths being located outside of their own religion and theology. These situations pave the way for the exclusivism of religious truth.

With religious fanfare and conflict caused by some sectarian and fanatical theological interpretations that give birth to the phenomenon of exclusive fundamentalism; a pluralist and inclusive theological vision is required to restore the substantive image of religion.

Etymologically, pluralism is a belief that the existence of different types of people with different opinions and beliefs is considered as a good thing.[52] Religious pluralism is a state in which every individual in a diverse religious society has the right, freedom, and security to worship according to his or her conscience.[53] Pluralist religious understanding is the opposite of the previous two types of religious understanding, namely exclusivism and inclusivism. Religious exclusivism believes that only the teachings of religion itself are true and are the only way of salvation. On the contrary, inclusivism believes that religion itself is the truest and the only way of salvation, the adherents of other religions can be saved by one's own.[54]

In practice, religious pluralism annihilates the belief that only religion itself is the truest and the only source of salvation. Knitter mentions that pluralism requires a change of faith in the superiority or finality of Christ and Christianity to the recognition of validity independent of other means.[55] In practice, religious pluralism requires the absence of belief that only religion itself is the truest and only source of salvation. Knitter mentions that pluralism requires a change in mindset from belief in the superiority or finality of Christ and Christianity towards the recognition of the necessity of being independent from other means. Religious pluralism requires respect for minority rights and freedom of conscience or without coercion in the context of belief.[56] Religious pluralism demands religious adherents to view all religions as having similarities and not having critical differences. Religious pluralism emphasizes the general similarity in all religions and ignores various doctrinal differences and the ability to disagree with other people.[57]

Pluralism theology is a theological paradigm that tends to find the core of universal religious values, where all religions and beliefs have the same goal of conveying the expression of divine belief. Because the universal goal of all human beings in religion is to achieve the pleasure of God, this goal must be developed jointly by all religious adherents, while the partial differences related to worship rituals are not seen as something substantial and therefore need not be questioned.

The emotional stability of a pluralist clergy prioritizes understanding

and empathy for all followers of different religions. They are not easily offended or emotional when standing in the midst of a diversity of beliefs. Although pluralist clergy are very tolerant and empathetic to differences, it does not mean that they forget the social agenda that concerns the lives of many people. They are proactively involved in social activities to maintain the harmonization of inter-religious relations.

Nurcholish Madjid once argues that a pluralist religious attitude had made Islam a mediator for harmonization efforts between Jews and Christians so that Islam achieved glory in the classical era. The paradigm of pluralism, according to Madjid, has underpinned the political policies of the early Muslim community regarding religious freedom.[58]

A pluralist theological paradigm should underlie the ideals and political goals of the state according to Madjid. Plurality is nature and therefore pluralism should be in line with the ideals of humanity. Islamic ideals in Indonesia should be in line with the ideals of Indonesian people in general. If it is related to the political goals of Muslims, Majdid claims that the Islamic political system is not only good for Muslims but it should deliver justice and goodness to all Indonesian people.

Pluralist theology offers the concept of respect for other people of different religions and empathy in diversity. This paradigm is in stark contrast to fundamentalist and sectarian theology which emphasizes the absolutism of truth alone or in its own group. Sectarian fundamentalists view those outside them as having deviated and need to be straightened out. Sectarian fundamentalists also do not empathize with differences while seeing differences as a deviation. They would try to persuade outsiders to follow their beliefs either by a means of persuasion or seduction or a means of violence.[59]

The deconstruction of the fundamentalism and sectarianism theological paradigm places more emphasis on eliminating the absolutism of truth claims. The absolutism of truth claims has clearly been the cause of tension and conflict between religious adherents. On the other hand, pluralism theology actually suppresses and closes the tendency for truth claims. The implementation of pluralism theology leads a clergy and religious adherents to be able to abandon the nature of fanaticism and absolute self-truth claims when interacting with heterogeneous external conditions. A pluralistic external condition is a conflict-prone area that could threaten the existence of a religion. Therefore, in this kind of external condition, both a clergy and religious adherents should be able to think and be inclusive as well as pluralist.

Strengthening the pluralism theological paradigm could prevent

tensions and conflicts between religious communities because the sources of tension and conflict have been closed tightly. Fanaticism and the absolute truth claim are two consciousnesses that are a source of tension and conflict between religious communities, and the pluralism theological paradigm closes these two sources of tension. The long experience of tensions and conflicts between religious communities caused by fanaticism and absolute truth claim is a sufficient evidence for saying that these two religious traits are diseases that disrupt harmonious relations among religious communities. Fanaticism and absolute truth claims are two religious traits produced by the fundamentalism and sectarianism theological paradigms. Religious experience in the major of religions of the world has shown that the fundamentalism and sectarianism theological paradigms have become the cause of disasters in the lives of religious people.

Thus, the deconstruction of fundamentalism and sectarianism theology into a pluralism theology is a necessary process for all religions in this world. Every religious person should be able to promote awareness of religious pluralism within their respective religious communities and warn the dangers of fanaticism and absolute truth claims in the context of inter-religious interactions. The pluralism theological paradigm aims to create harmony between religious communities. The harmony and peace that is built among all religious adherents is a reflection of the realization of true religious goals and ideals.

Conclusion

Religious reductive construct is a condition of religions that are believed to have been reduced and lost their meaning in human life. The religion that initially a set of Divine Teachings has been transformed into an entity that is considered threatening to men's own life. Religious people and theologians are the ones who bear the responsibility for the reduction of the image of religion. Their interpretation of religion as a sectarian, fanatical, fundamentalist, radical, and extreme nature has presented a terrible face of religion to men. The characters of such interpretations have unwittingly fostered a sectarian and partial commitment of the preachers and its adherents to be fanatical, intolerant, and ready to have a conflict against the owners of other theological beliefs. The essence of religion as a representation of messages of comfort, peace, dignity, and wisdom is lost and replaced with violent, violent, and hostile religious expressions. Inclusive and pluralist characters in religion are very important to be used as awareness among believers, especially the religious people. Religious believers should own an inclusive and pluralist awareness to control the

rate of fanaticism and extremism so that the phenomenon of religious violence could be prevented as early as possible.[]

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