

HISTORICITY OF INTERPRETATION OF THE QUR'AN

(A Study on Farid Esack's Thought and Its Implication On Seeing The Religious Others)



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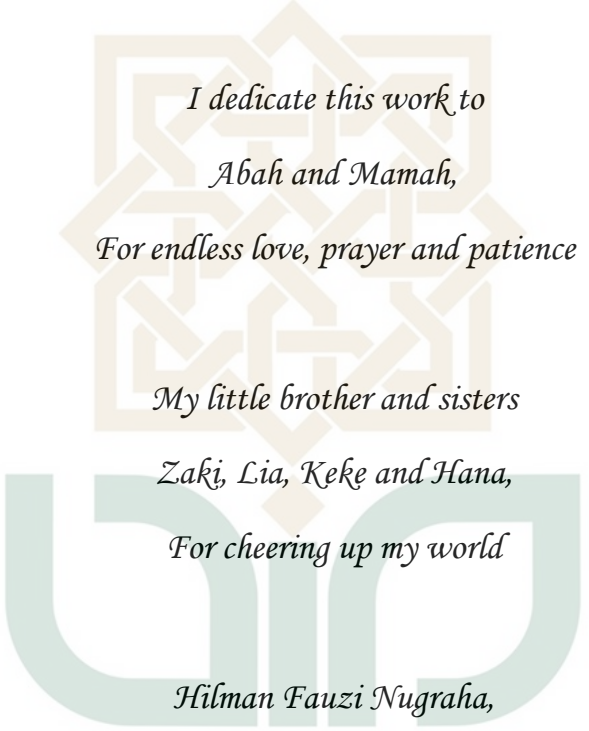
MOTTO

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ (٢٥) كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ (٢٦) وَيَبْقَى وَجْهَ رَبِّكَ ذُو
الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ (٢٧)

*“Then which of the favours of your God will ye deny?
All that is on earth will perish
But will abide (for ever) the face of thy Lord; full of Majesty, Bounty and
Honor”
(Qur’an 55 Verse 25-27)*

*“We came into this world with nothing, and We will leave with nothing. And in
the meantime We are just a lowly manager of the resources that God provides
Us with”*

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*I dedicate this work to
Abah and Mamah,
For endless love, prayer and patience*

My little brother and sisters

Zaki, Lia, Keke and Hana,

For cheering up my world

Hilman Fauzi Nugraha,

For always being there for me

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TRANSLITERATION

In this thesis, in translitering the Arabic names and terms, I have used the transliteration scheme used at Sunan Kalijaga Islamic State University Yogyakarta, which is based on Joint Circulating Letter of Minister of Religious Affairs and Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs of The Republic of Indonesia No. 158/1987 and 0543b/U/1987.

The Indonesian names and terms are written based on the newest Indonesian spelling, used since 1972. However, certain names of person and place written in old spelling will appear, especially in quotation. Some examples of the differences between the old and the new one are: *ch, dj, j, tj, oe* become *kh, j, y, c, u*.

I. Single Consonant

Arabic Letter	Name	Letter of Latin	Assertions
ا	Alif	not symbolized	not symbolized
ب	ba'	b	Be
ت	ta'	t	Te
ث	sa	s\	es (with point on top)
ج	jim	j	Je
ح	hā'	h{	ha (with point below)
خ	kha'	kh	ka and ha
د	dal	d	De
ذ	zal	z\	zet (with point on top)
ر	ra'	r	Er
ز	zai	z	Zet
س	sin	s	Es
ش	syin	sy	es and ye
ص	ṣad	s}	es (with point below)
ض	ḍad	d{	de (with point below)
ط	ṭā'	t}	te (with point below)
ظ	ẓā'	z}	zet (with point below)
ع	'ain	'	comma reversed from above
غ	gain	g	Ge

ف	fa'	f	Ef
ق	qaf	q	Qi
ك	kaf	k	Ka
ل	lam	l	El
م	mim	m	Em
ن	nun	n	En
و	wawu	w	W
هـ	ha'	h	Ha
ء	hamzah	'	apostrophe
ي	ya'	y	Ye

II. Double Consonant Caused by *Tasydid*, Written in Double

متعددة	written	<i>muta 'addidah</i>
عدة	Written	<i>'iddah</i>

III. *Ta' Marbutah* in The End of Word

a. Written by *h* if Read in *Sukun*

حكمة	written	<i>Hikmah</i>
جزية	written	<i>Jizyah</i>

(This stipulation is not required on Arabic words that has been assimilated into English Language e.g. zakah etc, except if the original word is wished)

b. When followed by article 'al' and the second word is separated thus it is written by *h*.

كرامة الاولياء	written	<i>Karimah al-auliya'</i>
----------------	---------	---------------------------

c. If *Ta' marbutah* lives by *fathah*, *kasrah*, *atau dhamah* thus it is written by *t* or *h*.

زكاة الفطرة	written	<i>Zaka' / Zakah al-fitrah</i>
-------------	---------	--------------------------------

IV. Short Vowels

-----	fathḥah	written	a
-----	Kasrah	written	i
-----	dāmah	written	u

V. Long Vowels

1	FATHAH + ALIF جاهلية	Written Written	a> <i>Jahiliyah</i>
2	FATHAH + YA'DEAD تنسى	Written Written	a> <i>Tansa</i>
3	FATHAH + YA'DEAD كريم	Written written	i> <i>Karim</i>
4	DAMMAH + WAWU DEAD فروض	Written Written	u> <i>Furuḍ</i>

VI. Double Vowels

1	FATHAH + YA'DEAD بينكم	Written Written	Ai <i>bainakum</i>
2	FATHAH + WAWU DEAD قول	Written Written	Au <i>qaul</i>

VII. Consecutive Short Vowels in a Word Separated by Apostrophe

أأنتم	Written	<i>a'antum</i>
اعدت	Written	<i>u'iddat</i>
لإن شكرتم	Written	<i>la'in syakartum</i>

VIII. If Article *alif lam* is Followed by Letter of *Qomariyyah* or *Syamsiyyah*,

Thus it is written by '*al*'

القرآن	written	<i>al-Qur'aḥ</i>
القياس	written	<i>al-Qiyas</i>
السماء	written	<i>al-Sama'</i>
الشمس	written	<i>al-Syams</i>

IX. The words of combination sentences are written based on it sound or pronunciation.

ذوى الفروض	written	Zāwl al-Furud{
اهل السنة	written	Ahl al-Sunnah

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Praise be to Allah, the most gracious and the most merciful, who gave and blessed His protection to us. Prayer and peace for the prophet Muhammad saw (peace be upon him), who has successfully brought us from the darkness to the lightness.

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Yogyakarta, June 24, 2011

Signed,

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ABSTRACT

Modern Muslim thinkers who try to find the answer of problems faced by contemporary Muslim society believed that previous scholars have failed to fulfill the need of understanding the whole idea and the spirit of the Qur'an; a thing that they call "Qur'anic moral messages" that is *shâlih li kulli zamân wa makân*. Farid Esack, a South African Muslim whose context is Apartheid regime, is also fully-aware of this need. He emphasizes that every interpreter has his or her own history, which become his or her basis in interpreting a text. Social transformation is not fully controlled by the sacred texts, but rather due to the conditions and the social challenges. Thus, the focus of this research are: What are the principal concepts of historicity of interpretation of the Qur'an according to Farid Esack? What is the implication of his concept to his thought about "the religious others"? What are the strengths and the weaknesses of his concept?

This is a qualitative research using descriptive-analytical method. The primary source is Esack's famous book, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity against Oppression*, while the secondary sources includes his books *The Qur'an: A Short Introduction*, *On Being A Muslim: Finding A Religious Path in the World Today* and other relevant data. Method of analysis includes historical continuity, taxonomic analysis and interpretation, while the approach used in this research is historical-philosophical approach.

The process of interpretation must be started with the awareness to the context surrounding the interpreter his or herself. This is what we call "historicity awareness". In addition to understand the context of him or herself, the interpreter also has to understand the historicity of the texts he or she interprets. That is why the study of *asbâb al-nuzûl* and *naskh* is important. Just by considering the Qur'an as God's revelation that is active and progressive, one can produce a progressive interpretation. This is formulated in a model of reception hermeneutics, which is communicating the idea of the universal text with the partial, ongoing process and discursive world. It necessitates dialectical relationship between text, context and the interpreter. Thus, Esack produced a new, different and more inclusive interpretation. This is reflected in how he interprets *Îmân*, *Islâm* and *Kufr*, as his starting point for understanding how the Qur'an's view to other religious communities. Esack's interpretation implies several things, as follows: (1) Deabsolutism of truth; the Qur'an recognizes the existence of pious people outside Islam and informs the universal, inclusive divine perspective that responds to the sincerity and commitment of all His people. (2) Relativism of understanding, it affirms that every truth and belief contains a possibility to be repaired, corrected and formulated in a dynamic and critical way. (3) The possibility of interfaith solidarity. Nevertheless, Esack's thought, especially his liberation hermeneutics will always change in reacting every symptom of social change that happens. This means that his thought is rather inconsistent in other situation. There are things would be permanent and there are things would always change in his hermeneutics.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Research Background

Since it was revealed more than a dozen century ago, the Qur'an is more like a book which tends to be engaged or wrestled with and chanted rather than just read.¹ As a text that has a very great power and influence on people's life, it is no wonder that it is later used as a powerful "weapon" by those who have access to it. Thus, no wonder if many groups, with different interests, are competing to claim the right to possess and interpret it.² The Quran, as a divine book that can provide answers to all questions, is a book which is contested and debated.

In the context of thought, the Qur'an has a very significant position. This is because Islam, as a sculptural faith, gives possibilities to Muslim society to pay serious attention to the revealed text, especially in responding to the problems of modernity. The Qur'an is a book about the principles, religious advices and morals for humanbeings. It is not a legal document, although it contains a number of fundamental laws, such as prayer, fasting and pilgrimage.³

¹ Farid Esack, *The Qur'an: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2002), pg. 191.

² Arkoun said that, nowadays, al-Qur'an has frequently been quoted by millions of its readers to ratify various behaviours, encourage various struggles, underlie various aspirations, fulfill various expectations, preserve various trusts and strengthen the identity of various groups. One could be a terrorist because of it, while the others could promote the concept of peace from it. From common Muslims, modernists, liberalists, radicalists, to revolutionists; al-Qur'an provides the guidance to all of them. See: Mohammed Arkoun, *Kajian Kontemporer Al-Qur'an*, trans. Hidayatullah (Bandung: PUSTAKA, 1998), pg. 1; and Farid Esack, *The Qur'an: A Short Introduction*, pg. 59.

³ Abdul A'la, *Dari Modernisme ke Islam Liberal: Jejak Fazlur Rahman dalam Wacana Islam di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2003), pg. 82.

In an attempt to understand the Qur'an, contemporary interpreters –such as Fazlur Rahman, Mohammed Arkoun, Abu Zayd, Hassan Hanafi and many others– do not simply accept what had been said by the text literally, but rather try to look what behind the text is, so that they can understand the whole idea and the spirit of the Qur'an. This is what they call “Qur'anic moral messages”, that is *shalih li kulli zaman wa makan*.

Modern Muslim thinkers around the world, who try to find the answer of problems faced by contemporary Muslim society, believed that previous scholars have failed to fulfill this challenge. Therefore, their attention to the problem of interpretation of the Qur'an has increased, as their awareness or consciousness of modernity. Andrew Rippin saw that awareness or consciousness is related to their interest on creating models of adequate interpretation of the Qur'an with the help of awareness and various available scientific methodologies.⁴ But, there are some problems with the entry of several ideas and scientific methods into the interpretation of the Qur'an, especially if it is associated with some objections concerning the imposition of foreign elements into the Qur'an.⁵

This conflict is such an intellectual dilemma that has to be solved by Muslim thinkers. In the one hand, they are obliged to interpret the Qur'an, in accordance

⁴ According to him, with these instruments, the interpretation of the Qur'an is expected to rationalize the doctrine that is found in, or referred to, the Qur'an, while, at the same time, demythologize various mystical and metaphysical understandings around the interpretation of the Qur'an. See: Andrew Rippin, *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices, Contemporary Period*, vol. 2 (New York: Routledge, 1993), pg. 83.

⁵ It is not surprising if then arise the accusation that the majority of Muslim modernists interpret the Qur'an not to understand and uncover the true meaning, but to pursue extra-Qur'anic objectives, for the sake of eliminating intellectual gap between the Muslim community and the discoveries and developments from the western world. See: A. N. M. Wahidur Rahman, “Modernist's Approach to the Qur'an” in *Islam and the Modern Age*, May 1991.

with the scientific and objective demands, while in the other hand, there is a moral importance to explain the Qur'an that meets the needs of Muslims today. Basically, these are not necessarily contradictory one to the other, but like two sides of a coin that are complementing each other. The awareness of the presence of contemporary reality and the demands of scientific standards in interpreting the Qur'an, can be seen in the writings by some contemporary Muslim thinkers, such as Fazlur Rahman, Arkoun, Hassan Hanafi, Amina Wadud, Ali Asghar Engineer, Abu Zayd and Farid Esack. They were considered, by Muslim world today, to represent the dissatisfaction against the "traditional" interpretation of the Qur'an, which, in their view, tends to be ahistorical and non-contextual.

In solving this dilemma, modern Muslim thinkers could be divided into two methodological categories. *First*, those who attempt to explain the meaning of the text with more objective and new views, then turn to the contemporary reality as a context. The first category is represented by several names such as Fazlur Rahman, Abu Zayd, and Arkoun. *Second*, those who depart from the contemporary reality of Muslim world towards the understanding that in accordance with the teachings of Islam, which may be obtained from the interpretation of the Qur'an. In this category, we can see several progressive thinkers, such as Ashgar Ali Engineer, Farid Esack, and Amina Wadud.⁶

Farid Esack is a progressive Muslim from South Africa and widely known through the concept of 'liberation hermeneutics'. Talking about the process of understanding the Qur'an in a more philosophical formulation, he stated:

⁶ Ilham B. Saenong, *Hermeneutika Pembebasan: Metodologi Tafsir al-Qur'an menurut Hassan Hanafi* (Yogyakarta: Teraju, 2002), pg. 94.

Each activity of interpretation is a participation in the historical process of language, pieces of tradition. Such participation occurs within a particular time and place. Our involvement with Qur'an also have to be occurred in this "prison", we cannot get ourselves free from, and put it outside, language, culture and tradition of ours.⁷

According to Farid Esack, Islam was recognized as a minority religion among the majority of South Africans people who were oppressed by apartheid regime. In a plural society as minority Esack experienced the oppression and suffering. Such action actually took a legitimacy from religious teachings, for the sake of certain groups. Thus, religion is just used by each group; the oppressor or the oppressed. They use the holy book –the same reference text– to support their own arguments.

For Esack, this fact is a form of a very narrow understanding of the Qur'anic verses. In the Muslim community he found that many verses are used as a basis for conservative Muslims to criticize him, or those who are collaborating with non-Muslims. They also gave label "*kafir*" for those who work with Jews and Christians, although for the sake of human's prosperity and liberation.⁸

Thus, with his South African context, Esack tries to reinterpret some key terms regarding how we see the Others, in order to have more open-minded and inclusive attitude. His work on this is including interpretation of the term *Îmân*, *Islâm* and *Kufr*. For him, the use of these terms in the Qur'an and some exegesis literature is indicating the relationship between its initial interpretation and its

⁷ Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity against Oppression* (Oxford: One World, 1997), pg. 76.

⁸ Farid Esack, *On Being A Muslim: Finding A Religious Path in The World Today* (Oxford: OneWorld Publication, 1999), pg. 65.

contemporary use is quite different.⁹ Besides, these three terms are the key terms for anyone who wants to understand his thought. With these terms, he attempts to reformulate between Self and The Religious Others in the context of struggle for liberation in South Africa.

Esack tries to do more intensive studies concerning the interpretation of the Qur'an by interpreting such terms (*Îmân*, *Islâm* and *Kufr*). Esack is trying to ensure that social transformation is not fully controlled by the sacred texts, but rather due to the conditions and the social challenges.¹⁰ So, to perform social transformation, the first way to take is understanding the social context, not the sacred texts. Therefore, according to him, the study on the verses of the Qur'an has to be started from reading the context in which the verses are implemented.¹¹

Through his works, Esack was trying to cover it all. He was, not only an expert in the study of hermeneutics of the Qur'an and the Bible¹², but also one of the actors who was directly involved in the struggle against the Apartheid regime, and significantly experienced how the struggle had been understood differently by

⁹ According to him, the terms have been "standardized". They are no longer viewed as a quality that can be owned by individuals; dynamic quality and diverse intensity, accordance with the stages they passed in their life. In fact, they are viewed as qualities that are embedded in a group, as an "ethnic characteristic". See: Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism*, pg. 115.

¹⁰ Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism*, pg. 52.

¹¹ Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism*, pg. 77.

¹² In 1989, he left South Africa to study hermeneutics of the Qur'an in the UK and the hermeneutics of the Bible in Germany. In Theologische Hochschule University, Frankfurt Am Main, Germany, he took Biblical studies for a year. Furthermore, he successfully earned his doctoral degree in Qur'anic interpretation studies from the University of Birmingham, England. See: Burhanuddin, *Farid Esack: Raison d'Etre Hermeneutika Pembebasan Al-Qur'an* at www.Islamlib.com, accessed on October 31, 2010.

each religious group in South Africa.¹³ Thus, by the uniqueness of the author, his books seem to be written in a unique and very distinctive South Africa.¹⁴

For example, one of his works, *But Musa Went to Fir'aun!: A Compilation of Questions and Answers about the Role of Muslims in the South African Struggle of Liberation*. In this work, Esack quotes many stories about the prophet Moses resistance against the tyrannical ruler, *Fir'aun* (Pharaoh). This book is considered to be an attempt from Esack to find the spirit of liberation to free people from colonialism of any tyrants.¹⁵ Another example is *Al-Qur'an: A Short Introduction*, is not only an introduction for anyone who wants to enter the world of the Qur'an. This book also can be a guide for those who want to understand the Qur'an. It describes how we should treat the Qur'an. This book, as admitted by him, perhaps the first book of introduction to the Qur'an by a Muslim that represents an attempt to listen more.¹⁶

The discussion about Esack becomes important and interesting because he has developed the urgency of the context surrounding the interpreter in the world of Qur'anic interpretation without ignoring the clarity and the discretion in

¹³ Louis Brenner, "Introduction" in Louis Brenner (Ed.), *Moslem Identity and Sosial Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (London: Hurst & Company, 1993), pg. 5-6.

¹⁴ Esack did not hesitate to expose his personal experiences as an important annotation that also affect his intellectual journey. Esack saw that the real story that had been experienced by him and his family is a foundation that could not be separated with the reality, which then establish the epistemological structure of liberation hermeneutics interpretation. Even so, there is also an assessment said that his statement was too hyperbolic. Quite often, some cynical assessment were arose, stating that Esack has too much exposed his hard life and his attempt to break away from the apartheid system.

¹⁵ Burhanuddin, *Farid Esack: Raison d'Etre Hermeneutika Pembebasan Al-Qur'an* at www.Islamlib.com, accessed on October 20, 2010.

¹⁶ Farid Esack, *The Qur'an: A Short Introduction*, pg. 11.

establishing and measuring his mind. Esack discusses the relevance of the scripture to modern issues without endangering the overall framework of the Qur'an and faith and its practices. He offers a quite different approach, which considers the historical context in the process of interpretation.

B. Research Questions

Based on the background, these following questions will become the focus of this research:

1. What are the principal concepts of historicity of interpretation of the Qur'an according to Farid Esack?
2. What is the implication of his concept of the historicity of interpretation of the Qur'an on his thought about "the others"?
3. What are the strengths and the weaknesses of his concept on historicity of Qur'anic interpretation?

C. Objectives and Significances

The objectives of this research are:

1. To describe the principal thoughts of historicity of Qur'anic interpretation according to Farid Esack.
2. To examine the implication of his concept of the historicity of interpretation of the Qur'an on his thought about "the others".
3. To understand the strengths and the weaknesses of his concept on the historicity of interpretation of the Qur'an.

The significances of this research includes:

1. Theoretically this thesis will contribute to the field of Islamic studies, especially to the discourses of Qur'anic interpretation, by providing a better understanding and comprehensive explanation on the subject matter that is very important in Qur'anic studies.
2. This thesis could give a better understanding and comprehensive explanation about Farid Esack, a phenomenal South African Muslim, in understanding the historicity of interpretation of the Qur'an.

D. Prior Researches

There are several studies concerning Farid Esack, including Nur Ichwan thesis entitled "Qur'anic Hermeneutics: An Analysis on Methodology Development Map of Contemporary Interpretation of the Qur'an". In his research, Esack was one of other three *mufasssirs* who have been studied, including Hassan Hanafi, Aminah Wadud Muhsin and Fazlur Rahman. Furthermore, he discussed about it again in his thesis entitled "A New Horizon in hermeneutics: Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's Contribution to Critical Scholarship Qur'anic." In his two works, he tries to provide a map of the methodology development of contemporary interpretations of the Qur'an. He explores that the pattern of contemporary Muslim scholar is shown in three maps: interpretation based on scientific study (*Tafsîr bi al-'ilm*), interpretation by philological approach and interpretation based on social-literal study (*Tafsîr adaby-ijtima'i*). Even so, the discussion of Esack still in the level of

methodology, and does not focus on interpretation, applications and implications of the method he uses.

Mukhlisin, in his thesis “Liberation Hermeneutics: A Critical Study on Farid Esack’s Thought in the Context of Liberation in South Africa”, wrote that Esack produced an epistemological form of liberation hermeneutics, which has three domains of thought: text, context and interpreter. These three domains then form a hermeneutical circle. In the end, these three domains is like a hermeneutical engagement which will generate not only theoretical framework but also praxis actions. With that structure of hermeneutics, Esack has initiated and practiced a model of existential exegesis.

Yudhisthira Hadiansyah in his thesis “Qur’anic Hermeneutics about Religious Pluralism: A Critical Study on Farid Esack’s Hermeneutics in *Qur’an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression*” explores about Esack’s construction of hermeneutics about religious pluralism in the context of South Africa. He said in his thesis, Esack as the minority and the oppressed tried to reconstruct the epistemology of hermeneutics through the dialectic between traditional and contemporary hermeneutics. The dialectic itself becomes an embryo of reception hermeneutics which has been practiced in many Holy Bible readings.

Mervyn Hiskett in his book *The Course of Islam in Africa* briefly reveals the genealogy of the emergence of Qur’anic hermeneutics in South Africa. According to her, the emergence of Qur’anic hermeneutics in South Africa was an effort from African Muslims –one of them is Farid Esack– to reinterpret the oppression

caused by the apartheid and the poor condition of black and colored African people.

This research will emphasize more on how Farid Esack views the Qur'an, by reviewing his thought about the historicity of interpretation of the Qur'an, then examining its implications on his thought about "the religious others".

E. Research Methodology

1. Type of Research

This is a library research that emphasizes on exploring and surveying the literatures relate to main discussions, either primary source or secondary ones.¹⁷ Thus, this research is based on written data, such as books, journals, articles concerning Esack's thought.

2. Sources of Data

Esack's book named *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity Against Oppression* will be used in this research as the primary source. Besides, his other books, such as *The Qur'an: A Short Introduction*, *On Being A Muslim: Finding a Religious Path in the World Today*, *But Musa Went to Fir'aun: A Compilation of Questions and Answers about the Role of Muslims in the South African Struggle for Liberation*; and other sources concerning Esack's thought will be used as the secondary ones.

¹⁷ Anton Bakker and Ahmad Chairiz Zubair, *Metodologi Penelitian Filsafat* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1994), pg. 39.

3. Data Collection Technique

The method for collecting data in this research is documentation method. Documentation means is collecting and making note to works which has written by scholars prominent, in this case is Farid Esack's works related to his thought, or writing by others which related to the his thought.¹⁸

4. Data Analysis Techniques

Once all the data are collected from several sources, the next step is analyzing data. The process of analyzing data is the process of organizing and sorting the data into patterns, categories, and descriptions on the basic unit in order to discover themes. Working hypotheses can be formulated as suggested by the data.¹⁹ In order to accumulate data into qualitative techniques, the analyses will include:

- a. Historical continuity, which is the method to describe the life history character, education, development of ideas, influences it receives, the socio-political circumstances of times that experienced by the characters, as well as study earlier.²⁰

¹⁸ Arief Furchan and Agus Maimun, *Studi Tokoh Metode Penelitian Mengenai Tokoh* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2005), pg. 54.

¹⁹ Lexi J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*, 2nd edition (Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya, 2002), pg. 103.

²⁰ Anton Bakker and Achmad Chairiz Zubair, *Metodologi Penelitian Filsafat*, pg. 64.

- b. Taxonomic analysis, the analysis is centered on a specific theme served to illustrate the problems that became the target of study, then track it down and explain it in more deeply.²¹
- c. Interpretation, is used to provide explanations from Farid Esack's thought, in this case is about the historicity of interpretation of the Qur'an, according to the writer's understanding level.²².

5. Research Approach

This research uses the historical-philosophical approach. Historical approach is used to trace and understand the life of Farid Esack and describe the discourse of contemporary interpretations of the Qur'an. While the philosophical approach is used to examine Esack's thought on the historicity of interpretation of the Qur'an by describing the concept given by Farid Esack, enclosed with critical analysis.²³ Interpretation is used to provide explanations from one's thought, in this case is Farid Esack's, according to the writer's understanding level.

F. Research Outline

In order to give a comprehensive and well-integrated description in discussing the theme, this research is divided into five chapters. Chapter one is introduction. It will present the background of this research, which is then

²¹ Arif Furchan and Agus Maimun, *Studi Tokoh*, pg. 65-67.

²² Anton Bakker and Achmad Chairiz Zubair, *Metodologi Penelitian Filsafat*, pg. 63.

²³ Lexy J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*, pg. 3.

formulated in the research questions and the objectives and significances of the writing. This chapter also describes the research method, the prior researches and the research outline.

Chapter two is a brief biography of Farid Esack, including his curriculum vitae, career education, intellectual works and socio-political and religious context in South Africa. This discussion is important, because by understanding the social and intellectual context, we will be able to apprehend the horizon of his thought in Islamic thought.

In chapter three, I will elaborate Esack's thought on the historicity of the Qur'an. I will describe his thoughts and how it should be understood. I also provide a number of critics against his thoughts, wherever possible.

Chapter four is an elaboration of his interpretation about *Îmân*, *Islâm* and *Kufr*. Here, I also try to examine the implication of his idea on the historicity of the Qur'an and his thought about Qur'anic interpretation method, in general.

The last chapter, the conclusion, contains the conclusion of the discussion in previous chapters, followed by some suggestions from me. The conclusions have been formed in several statements to answer the problems formulated in the research questions, while the suggestions is put forward in order to be considered as a recommendation for further study.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

A. Conclusion

From the description of Farid Esack's idea about the importance of understanding the historicity of interpretation of the Qur'an, the relevant thing is that the process of interpretation must be started with the awareness to the context surrounding the interpreter his or herself. This is what we call "historicity awareness". And Farid Esack, with his background of oppression and injustice, absolutely does his reinterpretation in accordance with that context. As well as understanding the context of him or herself, the interpreter also have to understand the historicity of the texts they interpret. That is why Esack very concerns with the study of *asbâb al-nuzûl* and *naskh* in his every interpretation. Just by considering the Qur'an as God's revelation that is active and progressive, one can produce a progressive interpretation.

Hence, Esack shows the importance in understanding the historicity of interpretation of Qur'an, which is formulated in a model of liberation hermeneutics as an attempt to solve the socio-religious problems in South Africa. Liberation hermeneutics is a kind of philosophical hermeneutics, which emphasizes the condition of interpretation, accentuates the subjectivity of interpreter and social condition surrounding him or her. Therefore, Esack criticized Fazlur Rahman's and Arkoun's model of hermeneutics, which are too much emphasizing on the moral and ethical aspects of the Qur'an. In liberation

hermeneutics, the Qur'anic texts could be called a "God's revelation" only if it has passed functional and pragmatical test. As a transformative hermeneutics, liberation hermeneutics changes the understanding of how a text can be accepted into how diverse understandings of a text can possibly be implemented. The principal thing of Esack's hermeneutical work is the relationship between God's revelation (text) with the reality (context), the interpretation with the action, and the theory with the practice.

By such understanding and hermeneutics, it is obvious that Esack produced a new, different and more inclusive interpretation. This is reflected in how he interprets *Îmân*, *Islâm* and *Kufr*, as his starting point for understanding how the Qur'an's view to other religious communities. Esack's interpretation of these terms implies several things, as follows: *First*, deabsolutism of truth. The Qur'an obviously recognizes the existence of pious people outside Islam; Jews, Christians and Şabiin. The Qur'an also informs the universal and inclusive divine perspective that responds to the sincerity and commitment of all His people. *Second*, Relativism of Understanding. It affirms that every truth and belief contains a possibility to be repaired, corrected and formulated in a dynamic and critical way. Relativism becomes an important thing as pre-condition as well as basis where pluralism can be implemented and developed. *Third*, the possibility of interfaith solidarity.

It is undeniable that Esack's thought and struggle has given its significance; the ruin of Apartheid regime and the freedom of the oppressed South African people. However, there are also some weaknesses lie in his thought, includes:

First, Esack's thought, especially his liberation hermeneutics will always change in reacting every symptom of social change that happens. This means that his thought is rather inconsistent in other situation. *Second*, Esack seems has stuck in what we call "create the media as a destination." Whereas the initial purpose of his liberation struggle is to produce liberation or to overthrow the apartheid regime. Instead, in the end Esack has stuck with making pluralism as a goal that has to be reached.

B. Suggestion

This work obviously is lack of perfection. Some issues have to be considered for further research. The liberation hermeneutics, when the context of oppression has been disappeared, will lose its significance. It is interesting if we could make a map or list of what will always be the permanent thing and what thing will always change in liberation hermeneutics.

The "historicity awareness" is also an interesting point to discuss, especially if it is used in Islamic studies in Indonesia. As we know that so much injustice and oppression phenomenon in which Islamic theology is not present in such situation. If that occurs, then theology in Indonesia is no longer speaks reactionary and lately but also involves in creating justice and humanity.

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