Towards “Kalimatun Sawa”: A dialogue between Islam and Christianity on the universal good

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Abstract
Relations between Islam and Christianity experienced debate and conflict, and this even led to violence. Even if it is realized that the two religions teach kindness to others. Debates and conflicts between the two religions can be reduced by means of kalimatun sawa, seeking a common meeting point between the two religions. Thus, this article aims to explain how the kalimatun sawa is based on the relationship between Islam and Christianity. The research method used is literature review with a comparative theology approach of religions. The results of the research are that Islamic and Christian dialogue must be based on building a high sense of tolerance and carrying out social activities to spread goodness in society.

Keywords: kalimatun sawa, conflict, universal good, islam, christian

INTRODUCTION

In this world, most people adhere to two religions, namely Christianity and Islam. According to data written on wikipedia, in 2010 there were 2.2 billion (31%) Christians worldwide, and 1.6 billion (23%) Muslims in the world. However, if current population trends continue, Islam will nearly catch up by the middle of the twenty-first century. Between 2010 and 2050, the world’s overall population is predicted to expand by 35% to 9.3 billion. Muslims, a relatively young community with high birth rates, are expected to rise by 73% within the same time span. The number of Christians is expected to increase at a slower rate (35%) than the global population overall. As a result, according to Pew Research forecasts, by 2050, Muslims (2.8 billion, or 30% of the population) and Christians (2.9 billion, or 31%) will be nearly equal, maybe for the first time in history. This proves,

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the world community sees Christianity and Islam as offering answers to life’s problems, so they embrace these religions. Not only internal beliefs, but several countries have also made Christianity and Islam as state ideologies that must be obeyed by their people. Or there are those who do not make one of these religions the state ideology, but society must obey religious rules.

Because Christianity and Islam are the religions practiced by the majority of the world’s people, Christianity and Islam have a responsibility to create world peace. Adherents of Christianity and Islam also have a social responsibility for the welfare of the world’s population through social movements. If these two religions experience conflict, what will happen is very dangerous, divisions will occur, and the conflict will expand. The conflict between Christians and Muslims is also very dangerous for our country, Indonesia. It is noted that most religions practiced by the Indonesian people consist of two religions, namely Christianity and Islam. In 2019, around 87.2% of the population adhered to this religion, Protestant Christianity 6.9%, and Catholic 2.9%.\(^2\) in 2019, around 86.9% of the population adhered to this religion, Protestant Christianity 7.47%, and Catholic 3.08%.\(^3\)

From the fact that Christians and Muslims form the majority of religions in Indonesia and in the world, both religions have a moral burden to maintain peace and order. This is done by means of dialogue, discussing misunderstandings of knowledge about the two religions, getting to know these religious beliefs more closely, forging cooperation for peace, and most importantly, preventing divisions from occurring. The research method used is literature review with a comparative theology approach of religions. Dialogue with the same views as a point of building harmony and the common good, namely Islam and Christianity. The dialogue that must be carried out is that dialogue is not looking for who is right, who is wrong. Who is the survivor who is lost, but a healthy dialogue so that harmony and peace are created.


DISCUSSION

Those who are close to Muslims are those who say "I am Christian"

In fact, you will find the people who are most hostile to those who believe are the Jews and the polytheists. And actually you find the closest friendship with those who believe are people who say: "We are Christians." That is because among them (Christians) there are priests and monks, (also) because in fact they do not boast (Surah Al-Maidah: 82).

Historically, Christianity and Islam have had a very close and close relationship.\(^4\) Christianity and Islam have a theological inseparable relationship.\(^5\) But when it comes to political relations, Christian and Islamic relations have experienced ups and downs, sometimes have to fight, and sometimes have to make peace and create a high civilization.\(^6\) But what will be presented is the theological and social relationship between Christianity and Islam, because from a political point of view, let alone different religions, other religions can experience conflicts.\(^7\) But it can also explain the peaceful relationship between Islam and Christianity from a political point of view, so that readers can know that there is peace in politics too. Then how is the closeness of Christianity and Islam in history? Below will be explained about that closeness.

Sociologically Close

Waraqah bin Naufal, Christian Who Tells Prophet Muhammad's Prophethood

When the Prophet Muhammad was staying in Hiro Cave, Prophet Muhammad was visited by the Angel Jibril to deliver the first revelation, namely surah al-alaq verses 1-5. Prophet Muhammad was ordered to read but Prophet Muhammad could not read it. Jibril


always repeated these words, but even the Prophet Muhammad could not read them. After Jibril gave the revelation to Prophet Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad did not know that it was revelation.8

After Jibril left, Prophet Muhammad returned home and said to Khadija, “Cover me! Cover me!” With his body still shaking, the Prophet Muhammad threw himself on the couch. Filled with anxiety, but did not dare to ask him. Khadija quickly brought a blanket and covered her. When his fear subsided, the Prophet Muhammad told his wife what he had seen and heard. After uttering these comforting words, Khadija went to tell her cousin, Waraqah, who was now old and blind. “Quddus! Quddus! " said Waraqah. "By God who controls my soul, the one who came to Muhammad was the greatest Namus, who used to also go to Musa. Indeed, Muhammad was a prophet to his people. Trust him!”9

Khadija then returned home and immediately conveyed what Waraqah had said to the Prophet, who was now ready to return to the cave with a calm mind, perhaps to fulfill the number of tahannuts days she had set for worshiping God. After finishing, as usual, he went straight to Mecca to perform tawaf. After tawaf, he saw an old and blind Waraqah among the people who were sitting in the mosque. He greeted him. Waraqah said, "Tell me, O son of my brothers, what you have seen and heard." The Prophet told him, and the old man again told what he had told Khadija. However, this time he added, "People will lie to you, will be treated badly, and they will throw you out, even fight against you! If I were still alive at that time, Allah knows, I will definitely defend the truth of His religion. "Then, Waraqah embraced him and kissed his head. After that, the Prophet returned home.10

The wisdom of King Najasyi

When the Prophet Muhammad received the message of Islam, he had to preach to the public about the revelations he received. Tatkalah preaching, he experienced disturbance and even torture. Not only did the Prophet Muhammad experience torment, but all his friends who accepted the message of Islam experienced it too. So that the

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9 Martin Lings, Muhammad Kisah Hidup Nabi Berdasarkan Sumber Klasik (Jakarta: Serambi, 2016), 20.
10 Muhammad Kisah Hidup, 61.

The Muslims rushed to move to Habasyah, led by Ja’far bin Abi Talib, a group of Muslims entered Habasyah. There he was warmly welcomed by King Najasyi and accepted and protected. Even though they had moved, the Quraish did not stop to torture Muslims. They walked to Habasyah in the hope that the king would hand over the Muslims to them.\footnote{Hassan, “Najasyi – a Pious Muslim King.”}

The Quraysh went to the king and asked that the Muslims be handed over to them. So the king gathered the Muslims and asked them, what religion caused you to separate from your people, while you did not embrace my religion, nor did you embrace the religion of the tribes around us? ” Ja’far replied, "O King! In the past we were ignorant people, worshiped idols, ate unholy flesh, committed immorality and the strong pounced on the weak. That is how we were until Allah sent us an apostle from among us, someone whose lineage we know, also honesty, integrity, and respect for the truth.\footnote{Muhammad Kisah Hidup, 116.}

The royal translator translated everything Ja’far said. Negus (Najasyi) then asked if there was any divine revelation brought by their prophet. When Ja’far said yes, Negus said, "Read it to me!" Immediately Ja’far read a portion of the Surah Maryam which had just been revealed not long before their departure. (read Surah Maryam: 16-21). The Negus wept, so did the pastors, when they heard the verse read, and they cried again when it was translated. Negus said, "It really comes from the same source as the one brought by Jesus." Then, he said to the messengers of Quraish, "You may go! For by God, I will not hand them over to you; they must not be betrayed."\footnote{Muhammad Kisah Hidup, 117-118.}

\textbf{When Tawheed and Trinity Meet}

Say: "O People of the Book, let (hold) a sentence (provision) where there is no dispute between us and you, that we do not worship except Allah and we do not associate Him with anything and (also) some we make some of the others, as a god other than Allah ".

\textsuperscript{12}Hassan, “Najasyi – a Pious Muslim King.”
\textsuperscript{13}Muhammad Kisah Hidup, 116.
\textsuperscript{14}Muhammad Kisah Hidup, 117-118.
If they turn away then say to them: "Behold, that we are a people who surrender (to Allah)"
(Surah Ali Imran: 64).

In the Koran, Allah invites the People of the Book, namely Jews and Christians, to one sentence, where when we discuss it, there will be no disagreement between us, namely inviting worship to Allah and prohibiting associating with him. In semitic religions, worshiping only the One God is a fundamental basis. Semitic religions reject multiple worship of God or polytheism. Monotheism is very emphasized, even if worshiping other than Allah, then he will be punished as polytheists. Mushrik is a sin that cannot be forgiven because it has violated one's nature as a human being, which is only surrendering to one God, not many Gods. The prophets and apostles were sent to restore mankind's belief in one God, and leave another God.¹⁵

Christianity and Islam strongly believe that only Allah is worshiped, because he is God who created the universe. In the Bible it is written:

Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, You must worship the Lord your God, and only Him shall you serve! (Matt. 4:10).
You must not have other gods before Me. Do not make yourself an image resembling anything that is in the heavens above, or that is on the earth below, or that is in the water under the earth. Do not bow down to him or worship him, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, who repays the wrongs of the father to his children and to the third and fourth descendants of those who hate me (Deu. 5:7-9).

Then how does Islam understand the trinity? This is where the discussion, which has not yet been completed, lies. For example, the Koran criticizes the formulation of the trinity where Maryam is part of the trinity. Yet according to the current trinity formula, Maryam is not part of the trinity. From this it is argued that there is a Maryamiyah sect that considers the mother of Prophet Isa to be part of God.¹⁶ The author has not yet received a reference which mentions the Maryamiyah sect.

Then regarding the divinity of Isa al-Masih, Imam Qurthubi in his interpretation states that this opinion is the theological paradigm of Jacobist Christians. At that time, they had the view that Isa al-Masih was God. Therefore, the Koran immediately offered a message from Isa al-Masih that he was not God, but a Servant of God who devoted himself to service to God.

If the writer pulls from history, maybe this is a debate about Christian nature, namely the human element and the divine element which in history will lead to debates about monophysics, nestorian, and others. Even in formulating the Trinity, Christians experience a long history and sharp debate. In fact, mutual misleading occurs. So no wonder, the concept of the trinity has a broad study, and if written as a whole, it will be a long discussion. In Islam too, the formulation of the divine concept has a long history. From the discussion of divinity arises the knowledge of kalam, which speaks of the essence and nature of Allah, the destiny and power of Allah, and others. In principle, all religions have a history of how complex concepts of divinity become easy to understand for their followers, so that they feel that God is close to them.17

What is important from the concept of divinity between Islam and Christianity is that they both reject polytheism. Christians and Muslims believe that Allah alone is One, One and All-All God. Islam and Christianity reject the worship of idols and spirits. In Islam itself, even though Christianity has the concept of a trinity, there is no single verse that clearly states that Christians are infidels or polytheists. Instead, they are mentioned in the Koran as the people of the book (people who are given the al-Kitab). This proves that the concept of the trinity with its various interpretations is to explain the concept of belief in the One God.18 Even Christians and Muslims must vow that they will worship nothing but

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Allah. If any of them departs from that pledge, Islam and Christianity must say "we are Muslims (surrender)."

**Universal Good**

Religion was sent down by God as a guide for human life. Religious differences have become God’s destiny for humans. In the Koran, Allah explained that he could make all inhabitants of this earth believe in one religion, but He did not want to. He wants people of various religions to test who is the most faithful of them. Allah says,

“And if your Lord wills, surely all people on earth will have faith. So do you (want) to force people to become believers in all of them?” (QS. Yunus : 99)

Religion has an important role in spreading goodness, because that is the duty of religion, as a human guide so that humans do not get lost in the realm of the world and the hereafter. The slightest kindness done will be rewarded. This is not limited to just Islam, all religions if they do good will get a reward from Allah. Allah says,

Surely the believers, the Jews, the Christians and the Shabiin, anyone among them who truly believe in Allah, the next day and do good deeds, they will receive a reward from their Lord, no worries to them, nor do they grieve. (QS. Al-Baqarah: 62)

There are criteria from this verse, namely, have faith in Allah, believe in the Last Day, and do good deeds, then Allah will reward them and they will not feel sad. In fact, Allah mentioned the Jewish, Christian and Shabiin religions. This shows that God wants to enforce justice and shows that goodness can be done by all religious people. In the above chapter, it has been explained how Christians have faith in God Almighty God, then Christian teachings regarding the Last Day are also contained in the holy book. The Bible tells,

Immediately after the torment of that time, the sun will be dark and the moon will not shine and the stars will fall from the sky and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the nations of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with great power and great glory. (Matt. 24:29-30).

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19 Connector, "Islamic Monotheism and the Trinity."
Regarding good deeds, Christians also have an obligation that they do, which is to spread love throughout the world,

Immediately after the torment of that time, the sun will be dark and the moon will not shine and the stars will fall from the sky and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the nations of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with great power and great glory (Matius 24:29-30).

Likewise with Islam, Allah commands to be fair and spread goodness to anyone. Allah says, O you who believe, let you be the ones who always uphold the truth for the sake of Allah, bear witness with justice. And don't your hatred of a people make you unfair. Do righteousness because he is closer to piety. And fear Allah, Allah knows best what you are doing.” (QS. Al Maa’idah: 8)

And don’t curse the gods they worship besides Allah, because they will later curse Allah by transcending limits without knowledge. Thus We make every people consider their work well. Then to the Lord they returned, and He told them what they had done before.” (Qs al-An’am : 108)

CONCLUSION

Islamic and Christian dialogue must be based on building a high sense of tolerance and for carrying out social activities in order to spread goodness in the community. The Koran has great respect for other religions, especially Christianity. The Koran says, They are not the same; Among the People of the Book, there are those who act straight, they read the verses of Allah at night, while they also prostrate themselves. (QS. Ali Imran: 113).

The above verse explains that some Christians also carry out the process of self-purification by reading Bible verses at night while weeping confessing their sins. This tradition I still see in Catholic and Orthodox circles, where they have places for prayer. Not infrequently, someone has to climb the mountain to reach that place. Of all the existing religions, one must spread love for others. This is a reflection of human diversity.

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