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Theology Thought of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan

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Abstract: Islamic theology is one of the branches of Islamic science which is born before the fifth century of the hijriah and is a branch of science that is quite important for learners who learn about Islam which discusses the basic principles of Islam itself, even though this branch of science is in the treasures of classical sciences is the branch of science that is most attacked and forbidden. This science is better known in the Islamic world with the name of science kalam, the science of usuluddin, the science of monotheism or the science of aqeedah. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, as well as classical theology scholars, referred to his theological concepts in the Qur'an. All theological scholars agree that the Qur'an is the main source. The difference of opinion between them is on the interpretation of some of the verses of the Qur'an. Differences in interpretation are very possible because they have different methodologies for interpreting them.

Keywords: theology thought; Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan

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I. INTRODUCTION

Theology is dynamic and because of people's understanding of theology is very likely to experience change. Azra tries to prove in his book, *The Theological Context in Indonesia: Islamic Experience*, that the Indonesian Islamic community experienced a shift in understanding of Islamic theology. These shifts and changes are largely influenced by the context of certain historical situations and conditions faced by Indonesian Muslims, which in turn encourages thinkers and reformers to react to understandings that are not in harmony with the theological notions they hold.

In the history of theological development globally, new figures have emerged that bring new insights across the theology adopted by the majority of Muslims in their regions. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan is one of the XIX century reformers who is quite interesting to study. Interesting, because his name is quite popular in his time. He is a productive educator and writer. At the end of his life he wrote a commentary on the Qur'an which, as his previous writings on understanding the teachings of Islam, were very controversial. Some of his controversial writings relate to the existence of jinn, angel and satan, blessings of prayer, prophethood, and eschatology. These topics are themes in the discussion of natural science or theology which provoke endless debate.

As mentioned above, certain historical situations and conditions will affect the understanding of theology. The renewal movement certainly rests on the assumption that Islam as a social reality in a particular environment is no longer relevant to what is supposed to be Islam. But even that renewal is very much influenced by the perspective, approach, and socio-cultural and religious background of each reformer. This certainly applies to all reformers, including Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan.

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan was born in a political condition in which British forces had planted his nails on Indian soil so that the Mughal royal power was barren and the king's position was only a symbol without authority. The king is only a puppet who carried out the policies of the British government. The progress of civilization offered by Britain could not be welcomed by Muslim communities of India who had felt comfortable during the reign of the Mughals in power. During this time they were lulled by the power of Muslim rulers who did not have good planning to prepare human resources to meet modernity. The attitude of antipathy towards new (colonial) newcomers increasingly makes them retarded. On the contrary, Hindus were more receptive to the new civilization and better met the standards for being recruited as employees in British government offices. This had an impact on economic disparity between Muslims and Hindus. This backward condition of Muslims was fairly well described by Sir William Hunter in his writing, "Our Indian Musalmans: Are they bound in conscience to rebel against the Queen?".

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II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Definition of Islamic Theology

Islamic theology is one of the branches of Islamic science which is born before the fifth century of the hijriah and is a branch of science that is quite important for learners who learn about Islam which discusses the basic principles of Islam itself, even though this branch of science is in the treasures of classical sciences is the branch of science that is most attacked and forbidden. This science is better known in the Islamic world with the name of science kalam, the science of usuluddin, the science of monotheism or the science of aqeedah. Long before, in the second century Hijri before this science had a theoretical framework, this knowledge already existed with another name, namely *al-fiqh al-akbar*. Each of these names certainly has its own background, objectives and scope. The theological term itself actually does not originate from the Islamic world, but it is only recently popular after Islamic thinkers came into contact with the study of Christian tradition. Etymologically, the word theology is derived from English theology. The English takes it from ancient Greek terms theologia, theo which means god, and logos which means reason, theory, science. Words that are commensurate with theology only developed in England around 1362, found in Willem Langland's Piers Plowman. The word logic and logic is actually a derivative of the word *logos* which in Arabic is called *mantiq*.

2.2 Modern Islamic Theology

The theological term is actually not a new repertoire in Islamic thought, it can be traced in the early days of Islam where at that time reasonual transformation took place through the translation of Greek works, monumental works such as Aristotle Theology, or Elementatio Theologia are known among Islamic thinkers This is a historical fact that reinforces the statement that the theological terms are not new in the treasures of Islamic thought, the reality that the mainstream of global thought at that time was driven by Muslims, besides the strong dominance of Arabism seems to be a factor that makes the term translated into Islamic wisdom with the term Kalam.

The use of theological terms as a substitute or substitute for term, is nothing but a historical process that is repeated (re-historical process) is a natural thing due to dialectical interaction along with the development of thought in the context of space and time.

Giving a bridge to the boundaries between classical and modern in the theological world really requires a comprehensive analysis because each figure and scientist never wants to say that he is in the classical realm which seems identical to backwardness and alienation. Maybe he was modern in his day but when new opinions and views took place the thought became classic and returned to the vortex.

III.DISCUSSION

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, as well as classical theology scholars, referred to his theological concepts in the Qur'an. All theological scholars agree that the Qur'an is the main source. The difference of opinion between them is on the interpretation of some of the verses of the Qur'an. Differences in interpretation are very possible because they have different methodologies for interpreting them. Some are very strict adhering to the naqli argument, some prefer the aqli argument. No matter how different they are, in general, they are generally not different. As long as they still believe in the same God and apostles, and read the same Qur'an, there are certainly more similarities than differences. The following are the themes of theology in which the theological scholars differ and how these concepts are conceived in Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's view:

3.1. Reason and Science

Attempts to interpret Islam according to reason and to consume intelligence in his time - first carried out by Mu'tazilah - were influenced by non-Muslim thinkers who mastered Greek philosophy. They accepted the truth of Greek philosophy and then tried to interpret Islam and tried to match the two. According to them, human reason was inviolable so they tried to adjust the Qur'an's teachings to philosophy. But slowly the spirit of independence thought more and more overflowing and mastering them so that admiration for philosophy exceeded reasonable limits. At certain levels, the Ikhwan al-Safa and Ibn Rusyd can be included in this category. They are interested in understanding Islamic teachings in the frame of logical reasoning principles which in their time were accepted as truth. The same motive certainly makes Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan interested in the way they solve religious problems. In many controversial matters, he quoted interpretations of the works of Mu'tazilah clerics, Ibn Rushd and the Brotherhood of al-Safa to support his thoughts.

Before discussing the power of reason and the significance of religion in Sir Sayyid's perspective, it is better to discuss in advance what intelligence is. Reason in Indonesian means the power to think about something. This word is adopted from Arabic 'aql which at first means is charming or binding. Etymologically, the meaning is a rope or barrier. It seems that this etymological meaning is based on the function of reason. The function of reason is binding or blocking people from mistakes. According to al-Kindi, reason is a substance that can understand the nature of something. Meanwhile, philosophers interpreting reason is a power that is in the

soul has the ability to explain meanings, conclude premises and examples. Reason is sometimes identified with logic because this one branch of philosophy deals with the knowledge of right and wrong. Something that can be accepted by truth is called logically.

Reason is also sometimes referred to as a ratio, while reason expression is said to be rational. Logical and rational is when something is true according to reason with the measure of natural law or in other words the truth of reason proven by natural law. Rationalism believes that the truth comes from reason. But unfortunately, reason is strongly influenced by human experience and education so that the minds of every human being are not the same because they have different experiences and education. A person can say something is logical, but according to others it may be illogical. So, thinking according to logic does not necessarily get the agreed truth. Therefore, empiricism is then needed.

Logic, empiricism and positivism both rely on the ability of the human mind to know, while other sources of knowledge are scripture (religion). Greek philosophy that seeks the truth using the power of reason and then developed by Europe in the revival era finally faced with religion whose source of truth is the holy book (revelation). In the 12th century, a period of renaissance was underway. The Renaissance period is a period of rationalism and empiricism in which naturalism and materialism flourish, then God, mankind, and nature are reexamined with new interpretations.

The conflict between scientific knowledge pioneered by scientists and religion has begun in Europe, where the church at that time was the highest authority. All knowledge must be in line with the church. This conflict then triggered a revolution of reason liberation from the domination of the church which Copernicus began in the 15th century.³ The Heliocentric Theory put forward by Copernicus marked the beginning of the era of enlightenment (Aufklarung) which reached its momentum in the seventeenth century, where previously the church had a geocentric view initiated by Ptolemy in the 2nd century AD and later recognized as truth not only by the church, but also by Muslim philosophers. After the 17th century, the discussion of scientists was not only about God's relationship and nature, but also almost covered all sides of life. The progress of science and technology is responsible for modernity that was formed in the next century. Secularism becomes a necessity and religion no longer plays an important role. When humans become more rational, religion no longer plays an important role in knowing good and bad. The next period was a period where religion began to be marginalized by technology and industry. The teachings and understandings of religion were previously considered myths because they were incompatible with logic, logos, and ratios now becoming new gods that were worshiped and believed to be able to change lives for the better. Christians in Britain, France and America began to question religious teachings, tried to revise old ideas, doubted the miracles and irrational beliefs they called superstitions. The catchphrase is "natural law" and "reason". In its development later, religion must be in accordance with reason, by taking the form of "rational religion (natural or rational religion)".

Because of his contact with Christianity and Hinduism, Sayyid Ahmad Khan learned to understand religions and know what he considered right. After investigating, he finally found a way to objectively test the value of each religion. On one occasion he said, an atheist or a religious person would both acknowledge the truth that humans have a structure or God has bestowed upon him the power with which he can do something and cannot do something else; so he must choose, in his life, a way in which his internal and external qualities provide service as the reason why he was born. (and God has bestowed strength on humans so they can do something or cannot do anything else). To test the truth or validity of a religion, Ahmad Khan has his own standards. If religion is in accordance with human nature, or with the nature / law of nature in general, then that is the true religion. All creations, including humans, are acts or works of God (work of God), while religion is God's words (word of God): there can be no contradiction between one another.⁵

The basic of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's theology is the power of reason. The reason referred to by Sir Sayyid is not an abstract and discursive philosophical mind, but empirical reasoning that is in accordance with the thinking of the IX century. It is an accumulation of crystallized human policies, which are attached to each person by which conclusions are drawn from observing objective phenomena or mental thinking processes using inductive and deductive theories. This capacity makes humans able to make new discoveries and lead them to understand and control the forces of nature. With this sense man knows something that is the source of happiness and then tries to get as much profit as possible from him. With this reason, humans also ask about why, where and how events take place around them.⁶ Reason referred to here is common sense, which is

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¹ Hodri, "Penafsiran Akal dalam al-Quran, Mutawatir" in *Jurnal Keilmuan Tafsir Hadis*, Vol. 3, No. 1., Juni 2013

² See Dani Vardiansyah, *Filsafat Ilmu Komunikasi*, (Jakarta: Indeks, 2008)

³ Ivan Eldes Dafrita, Ilmu..., h. 171 – 172

⁴ Karen Amstrong, Berperang Demi Tuhan, (Bandung: Mizan, 2002), h. x

⁵ J. M. S. Baljon, *The Reforms and Religious Ideas of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, (Lahore: Orientalia, 1958), h. 65 ⁶ Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Tafsir al-Quran*, vol. III, (Aligarh: Institute Press, 1892), h. 11-12

recognized by everyone. It is this reason that is the main criterion for understanding and deciding something that is dependent on the authority of revelation. Revelation also ordered humans to use their minds in understanding all the problems of life, including beliefs (faith). Throughout the history of Islamic thought no figure has left the power of reason to understand the commands of religion. However, later, in the era of Sir Sayyid, movements emerged which closed the door to ijtihad and closed the door to religion for common sense. According to them, human reason is imperfect and very limited otherwise God's words have no doubt. Not useful, even insolent, if the human mind tries to complete the words of God. Efforts to interpret God's words rationally can lead to heresy and the real meaning of revelation, so that over time it will destroy religion itself. Sir Sayyid opposes this assumption. According to him, the Qur'an is not revealed as a guide for learned people only, but also guidance for all levels of humans, educated or not. Mutgorabihat (allegorical) verses are deliberately revealed to be interpreted according to the intellectual level of each, according to the intellectual development of the era. Apparently, that is what is meant by the phrase that "the Qur'an is suitable for all ages". These verses can be interpreted differently in each era and in that era, it is considered a truth. Therefore, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan tried to reinterpret the Our'an in the perspective of modern science.

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan acknowledged that human reason is limited, but humans have no other choice to test the truth of a statement, or convince something that is doubtful, other than with reason. Humans are distinguished from animals because of their ability to think so that they are given far greater obligations and responsibilities. The point of reason is to know the reality and properties of things, abilities that have been attached to humans since Adam was created. Sir Sayyid refers to verses 2: 29 about God's command to Adam to tell angels all asma '(name). That is, humans are given the ability to know something, think of new things, and arrive at synthetic and analytical consequences derived from premises and thoughts. That is how Sir Sayyid understands the meaning of "naming", not just knowing the name of an object. Defining something certainly requires knowledge that can explain something by relying on all information and thought, not like a parrot who can only name names. However, human knowledge is only limited to external knowledge, does not arrive at its essence. Baljon wrote, "This would be a point out that we can only know the names and not the essence of (haqiqah)."9

Knowledge without faith (Urdu: tasdiq) about its truth will be of no use, both in terms of the world and religion. "What kind of belief do we need?" Sir Sayyid, in Bashir Ahmad Dar, then explained that we know ten more than three. If there is someone who states the opposite, and to convince it then he turns the stick into a snake, we remain in the belief that ten more than three, even though we are amazed by the miracle of changing a stick into a snake. This belief is what is meant. Without such belief, there is no use of knowledge. A Jew said that he believed in the oneness of God because the Prophet Moses said so. A Christian believes in the trinity because John Baptist says so. How does this contradiction become a truth? To strengthen his belief, the Jew said that Prophet Moses spoke with God and turned wooden sticks into snakes so that Moses' words were not in doubt. The Christian said that Jesus revived the dead so that there was nothing to doubt in his words. If so, then they are not believing in the oneness of God or the trinity, but rather they believe in the miracles of these Prophets. What is the solution to this conflict? Only reason can decide this problem and bring it to faith. But reason can also be wrong? Right, reason can be wrong, but there is no other choice. Wrong thinking from someone can be corrected by other people's thoughts, so also wrong thinking in one age will be corrected by thinking in another era. 10

The development of modern science is very dependent on the power of reason. Modern science and reason only work within the scope of natural law. Both cannot violate the principles of nature. It can be said that the weltanschauung of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's theology is nature. But what nature is meant by Sayyid Ahmad Khan? It is true that the theology of Sir Sayyid refers to the naturalism developed by IX scientists in which according to them nature was a system of nature which was subject to certain mechanical and physical laws which always characterized the uniformity of character in anything without exception. The mini-style mechanism does not only apply to non-organic spaces, but also includes organic ones, even humans are subject to unchanging laws. In the beginning, human knowledge about natural law was limited. Along with the advancement of human knowledge, the nature space also increases and seems to be wider along with what we find in nature, what we see, what we feel, even human actions and thoughts and beliefs are part of the chain that is in the law nature that cannot be avoided. Interpretation of nature quantitatively leads to the rejection of the existence of God, and IX century scientists do not hesitate to conclude this. They try to explain something complex to be simple until reducing mind and human consciousness becomes merely an epiphenomenon of a physio-chemical process. Sir Sayyid was not critical of the views of Western naturalism and was attacked by

⁷ Bashir Ahmad Dar, *Religious...*, h. 158., See Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, h. 125-128

⁸ Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Tafsir al-Quran*, vol. I, (Aligarh: Institute Press, 1892), h. 56-60

⁹ J. M. S. Baljon, *The Reform...*, h. 82

¹⁰ Bashir Ahmad Dar, *Religious...*, h. 162-163

Jamaluddin Afghani who called him 'nechari' (naturist), a person who only believed in nature, not God. But Sir Sayyid's naturalism is not an anti-God naturalism, Ahmad Dar calls it 'superficial' naturalism, only to get the sympathy of young intellectuals who are in the charm of naturalism. "But Sayyid Ahmad's naturalism only skindeep. "It was a thin veener" which is a thin veener which has a pre-prevalent prejudice towards the omnipotence of nature."

IV.CONCLUSION

In seeing the relationship between revelation and reason, Sayyid Ahmad Khan's thought shows that revelation serves as confirmation and information. While in seeing Sir Sayyid's actions and human will more closely resembled the Kasab Muhammad Abduh theory. He believes that God has unlimited power but without realizing it he had also limited God's power to the rules of causality of natural law. Then he relates it to God's infinite will, on his unlimited will that he creates a fixed (fixed) rule of causality. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan believes that God has character. If God does not have omniscient, omnipotent and so on, how can we know that He is omniscient and omnipotent. He left a debate about the creation of these traits, whether he was created or existed by himself. Sir Sayyid does not consider that the nature of God is something separate from God, or that is one with God. He uses the character of God because God himself mentions it in the Qur'an, and only God knows about the nature of its nature. Sir Sayyid rejects God can be seen with the eyes of the body, he cannot be seen in the world nor in the hereafter. Humans can see God but not see the truth. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan refused that the Qur'an is created (creature), he believes that the word of God was transmitted to the Prophet. is a verbatim inspiration, the whole *lafziyah* and *maknawiyah* without intermediaries, so he is eternal. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan does not believe in miracles other than the Qur'an. But not the beauty of the language, but the contents that apply to all ages.

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan refused the Prophet's Hadith to be a source of religious teachings except for a small portion which was truly undoubtedly his authenticity. As a result of his belief in human freedom of will and freedom of action which is limited in natural law, then of course he believes in God's justice, but God's justice in the frame of His natural law. Sir Sayyid considers prayer to only function as a good deed that brings merit of worship. God will not grant prayers like what humans want to happen. Sir Sayyid considers demons and angels to be potential or good and bad tendencies in humans. And jinn are uncivilized people who live in remote places. Sir Sayyid believes in heaven and hell, but cannot be described. The existence of heaven and hell serves to motivate people to do good. The description of heaven and hell in the Qur'an and Hadith is a metaphorical picture.

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¹¹ Bashir Ahmad Dar, *Religious...*, h. 151

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