

## FREEDOM OF RELIGION IN RASHID RIDA'S PERSPECTIVE

Moh. Abdul Kholiq Hasan  
State Institute for Islamic Studies (IAIN) Surakarta  
hasanuniversitas@gmail.com

### Abstract

Freedom of belief is the fundamental principle in Islam, but in the reality, it is often contravened and abrogated by war verses. Violence in the name of religion becomes its effect. This study discusses Rashid Rida's perspective on freedom of religion in his Tafsir Al Manar. This study is a library research, using analytic descriptive method with romantic hermeneutic approach. The result of the study showed that Rasyid Ridha clearly stated that the principle of religious freedom is the most fundamental Islamic principle and nothing can abrogate the principles. The principle is permanent and universal. Rasyid's attitude like rideness is no longer free from the influence of his father who is very opened with other faiths. With this principle, everyone has a right to believe anything they believe freely and express their religion based on their beliefs

**Keywords:** Freedom of Religion, Rasyid Ridha, al-Manar.

### Introduction

Freedom of religion is the main and fundamental principle of Islam as stated in Baqarah verse 256. The verse means "There is no compulsion in religion: rectitude has become distinct from error". In fact, the basic principle is often violated and judged as the abrogated verse by war verses. As the result, there has been violence in the name of religion. Rasyid Ridha as one of the contemporary tafsir scholars is the one who does not agree in *naskh* concept in Al Quran. Then, how is his perspective in verses that explain about freedom of religion? This study is to discover the problem.

The previous studies, which discussed freedom of religion are "Freedom of Religion, Apostasy and Islam" (Saeed and Hassan Saeed, 2011). They concluded that freedom of religion is also a fundamental right of a human. Thus, it is not right to sentence people who apostate. The next study entitled "*Konsep Toleransi Beragama Dalam Tafsir Al Qur'an Tematik Karya Tim Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia*" (Dinata, 2012). is literally translated into "*Tolerance Concept in Religion in Alquran Tafsir by Religious Affairs Department Team in Indonesia*". The study concluded that religion freedom principles, freedom in choosing a religion are a human right.

Another study entitled "*Pandangan Muhammad Rasyid Ridha terhadap Pluralisme Agama Dalam Tafsir Al Mannar*" literally means "*Perspective of Muhammad Rasyid Ridha toward religion pluralism in Al Mannar Tafsir*". (F anani, 2013). It concluded that Rasyid Ridha did not acknowledge the existence of religious pluralism, a view judging that every religion is true. The next study is *Die Freiheit des Glaubens im Islam und die Einwände gegen sie: Dschihad, nichtmuslimische Untertanen, der Tribut und die Todesstrafe für Apostasie* (Ibrahim, 2014). It concluded that religion freedom in Islam is not against international rule. People who apostates doesn't reserve the right to get a death sentence.

The last study is entitled "Kebebasan beragama dalam Perspektif *Tafsir Maqasidi Ibnu 'Asyur*" (Munir, 2015). It literally means "Freedom of religion in *Tafsir Maqasidi Ibnu 'Asyur perspective*" It concluded that Ibnu' Asyur in his perspective on freedom of religion is sharia purpose (*Maqasid al-Syariah*) and sharia characteristic that

become a basic principle of tolerance, equality, and freedom. From all of the studies, it could be seen that there is no study, which discusses scientifically freedom of religion based on Rasyid Ridha's perspective in Al Manar Tafsir.

## Method

This study is a library research using analytic descriptive. The primary data is verses of freedom of religion in Al Manar Tafsir and the secondary data is literature and related studies. This study used Schleiermacher's romantic hermeneutic approach. With this approach, the researcher critically studies toward the text in Rasyid Ridha's Tafsir, and observes Rasyid Ridha's background not only in cultural history but also emotional context. Furthermore, it is also supposed to be able to reveal the deepest meaning in Rasyid Ridha's Tafsir toward verses of freedom of religion.

## Rasyid Ridha and Al Manar Tafsir

Rasyid Ridha has full name Muhammad Rasyid bin Ali Ridha bin Muhammad Syamsudin. He was born 18th October 1865 AD in Qalmun, Tripoli-Syam, North Lebanon (Mohammad, *et al.*, 2006, 312). He is still the descent of Husain, a grandson of Prophet Muhammad SAW. His father is a scholar and a follower of Syadziliyah (Asmuni, 1994, 82). He has a wide and good relationship with other believers. His loose and open attitude to the followers of other religions has influenced Rasyid Ridha's personality as an adult to non-Muslims. In 1299 H/1822 AD, Rasyid Ridha studies in *al Madrasah al Wataniah al Islamiyah* in Tripoli, led by Syekh Husain al-Jisr, a scholar that influenced Rasyid Ridha's perspective (Al-'Adawi, n.d, 30).

Rasyid Ridha politically lived in time when Turkish *Khilafat* fell out (Shalabi, 2001, 472). The Western's colonization became stronger in Middle East country. Thus, the economy then worsened and the reformist group urged demanding alteration (Al-'Adawi, n.d, 16-18). On the other side, the religious situation there was full of *bid'ah*, *taqlid*, *khurofat* (Ramdhani, 1434 H, 36-37). Those situations encouraged Rasyid Ridha to make active progressive movement (Fauzi, 1415 H, 27-29). His struggle started from his hometown and it was inspired by the movement for changes done by Muhammad Abduh (Fauzi, 1415 H, 15). They met in 1855 AD in Tripoli, and in 1312 H/1894 AD (Ramdhani, 1434 H: 35). Both of them agreed to publish Al Manar magazine in 22 *Syawal* 1315 H/ 17th March 1898 AD (Fauzi, 1415 H, 17). Rasyid Ridha passed away in 23rd *Jumadil Ula* 1354 H/2nd August 1935 AD (Shihab, 2013, 66).

One of the most phenomenal works of Rasyid Ridha is Tafsir of Al Quran Al Hakim and also known as Al Manar Tafsir. This Tafsir was a response to the past condition. There are 12 volumes, started from Al Fatihah and ended with Yusuf in verse 53. The form of tafsir or exegesis in Al Manar is *bi al-Ra'yi*, with *tahlili* method (Suma, 2013, 379). The pattern of this tafsir is *adabi ijtimai'i*, a pattern that tends to interpret letter, culture, and society. It is easy to understand and touch real life in society (Baidan, 2011, 425).

## Freedom of Religion in Perspective of Rasyid Ridha's Tafsir

Based on the analysis toward Rasyid Ridha's Tafsir related to the verses of freedom of religion like verse 256 in Al Baqarah (Ridha, Vol.3, 1990, 31), verse 66 in Al An'am, verse 99 in Yunus (Ridha, Vol.11, 1990, 209), and verse 28 in Hud (Ridha, Vol.12, 1990, 55), Rasyid Ridha clearly stated refusing that those verses are abrogated or "*nasakh*" with war verses. This view came from his belief that *naskh* or abrogation did not exist in Al Quran. According to him, related word "*naskh*" in

verse 106 in Al Baqarah is not able to be understood as argumentation of *Naskh* existence in Al Quran. It is a view that had been explained by Abu Muslim al-Asfahani far before (Al-Qardhawi, 1999, 326-327).

Rasyid Ridha rejected the meaning of verses in “ما ننسخ من آية” (The Cow, 2.106) with Al Quran verses, but it means as *mukjizat* argumentation of Messenger's truth. This is because the end of the verse is “ألم تعلم أن الله على كل شيء قدير” "Do you not know that Allah is over all things competent?" and it does not end with “ألم تعلم أن الله على كل شيء عليم” “Do you not know that Allah is over all things competent and perfectly wise?”, thus the meaning of the verses with the sign of *mukjizat* is better and in line with wording of Al Quran *balaghah* (Ridha, Vol.1, 1990, 343-344). Besides, many verses, in the beginning, guessed that they had been *nasakh*, but in fact, *takhsis* or *taqyid* or *ta'wil* or other ways can compromise the meaning of verses (Baidan, 2011, 178-180).

For example, Rasyid Ridha refused clearly jihadi and war verses (آيات الجهاد و السيف) in At Taubah or others, abrogated verses about ethic and principles in Islam in doing goods with non-Muslim. According to him, verses related ordering to do good deed, to forgive and to relieve are globally valid at any time and at any condition. Jihadi and war verses prevail in certain condition. So, it is not true that jihadi and war verses abrogated peace verses. Islam is religion of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (Ridha, Vol. 02, 1990, 172-174).

Rasyid Ridha believed that there will be no *naskh* toward *aqidah*, *akhlaq*, and news verses (Ridha, Vol.2, 1990, 112). Thus, he inveighed view, which determined the existence of *nasakh* only based on logic. Such action can cause hundred verses of Al Quran are able to be claimed "*mansukh*" or abrogated. He questioned how to abrogate something sure with the assumption, prioritize *ijtihad* on *nash*. Thus, he asked Muslim not to be easy in accepting *nasakh* claim. It is important to hold on to Qur'an and Sunnah firmly, and Sahabi also Salafusaalih. The *mansukh* or abrogated verses don't exist (Ridha, Vol.2, 1990, 114).

Based on the view constructed by Rasyid Ridha above, the doctrine of "No compulsion in religion" is the noble norm and fundamental principle in Islam. No one could be forced to convert to or apostate from Islam (Ridha, Vol.3, 1990, 33). Such principles will not be abrogated or *mansukh* at any condition, and in any verse (Hasan, 2013, 71). It has been stated by al-Syatibi, that *nasakh* will not occur on things related global norm, sharia purposes and on things like news (Al-Syathibi, Vol. 3, 1997, 338-345).

Freedom of religion principles according to Rasyid Ridha is not only fundamental in Islamic sharia and previous prophets (Ridha, Vol.12, 1990, 191) but also as the first revealed verse in Mecca (Ridha, Vol.11, 1990, 209). Thus, it is not true that Medinan verses abrogate Meccan verse because the characteristic of meccan verse is eternal, humanist, equal, and universal and different from medinan verses (Mustaqim *et.al*, 2015, 22).

The factors why there was a view about freedom of religion verses abrogated by war verses, according to Rasyid Ridha were not only *taqlid* but also the incapability in differing the meaning of *nasakh* in Sahabi time that is often used as a reference, by *nasakh* term in Usul Fiqh (Ridha, Vol.11, 1990, 209). As the consequence, there was mixture between *nasakh* meaning with *bayani*, *takhsis* and *taqyid*. So, there is a claim in new *muffasir* about the numerous abrogated verses in Al Quran including freedom of religion verses (Al-Suyuthi, Vol.02, 1996, 66).

What Rasyid Ridha thought about that principle is not detached from condition at that time when there were Islam enemies brought up negative accusation to Islam and Muslims. Islam was accused spreading war compulsion. So, Rasyid Ridha clearly refused the accusation and criticize Muslim's attitude that

followed that issue based on *naskh* theory in Al Quran that had no argumentation.

## Conclusion

Rasyid Ridha viewed that freedom of religion principle is very fundamental Islamic doctrine and nothing can abrogate it. This principle is permanent and universal. Rasyid's attitude like riddeness is no longer free from the influence of his father who is very opened with other faiths. With this principle, everyone has a right to believe anything they believe freely and express their religion based on their beliefs. Every religion can live together and respect each other. It has been the basic Islamic principles that can bring peace and *rahmat* for universe.

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