


FARID ESACK'S HERMENEUTICS AND THE CONTEXTUALIZATION OF RELIGIOUS TEXTS: A RESPONSE TO SOCIAL INEQUALITY

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Abstract

This study explores Farid Esack's hermeneutical approach to the contextualization of religious texts and its relevance in addressing social inequality. The research aims to analyze how Esack's interpretive framework integrates liberation theology with Qur'anic exegesis to construct a socially engaged understanding of Islam. By adopting a qualitative library research design combined with conceptual analysis, this study examines Esack's core principles, including his emphasis on historical consciousness, ethical responsibility, and the progressive nature of revelation. The analysis identifies three main components of Esack's hermeneutics: the prioritization of marginalized voices in interpretation, the call for theological discourse to transcend metaphysical speculation and engage with concrete socio-political realities, and the insistence on praxis as an inseparable dimension of faith. The findings indicate that Esack advocates a liberationist reading of scripture, positioning theology as a normative framework for ethical action and structural transformation within pluralistic societies. These insights underscore the potential of Esack's hermeneutics as a critical response to contemporary issues of justice and inequality. This study contributes to the broader discourse on Islamic hermeneutics, social ethics, and liberation theology by offering a conceptual model that bridges scriptural interpretation with commitments to social justice and human dignity.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji pendekatan hermeneutika Farid Esack dalam mengontekstualisasikan teks – teks keagamaan dan relevansinya dalam mengatasi ketimpangan sosial. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah menganalisis bagaimana kerangka interpretatif Esack mengintegrasikan teologi pembebasan dengan penafsiran Al – Qur'an untuk membangun pemahaman Islam yang berorientasi pada keadilan sosial. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan (library research) yang dipadukan dengan analisis konseptual, studi ini menelaah prinsip – prinsip utama hermeneutika Esack, termasuk penekanan pada kesadaran historis, tanggung jawab etis, dan sifat progresif wahyu. Analisis ini mengidentifikasi tiga komponen utama: prioritas pada suara kelompok marjinal dalam interpretasi, desakan agar diskursus teologis melampaui spekulasi metafisik dan terlibat dalam realitas sosial – politik konkret, serta penegasan bahwa praksis merupakan dimensi yang tak terpisahkan dari iman. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Esack mendorong pembacaan teks yang bersifat pembebasan, menjadikan teologi sebagai kerangka normatif bagi tindakan etis dan transformasi struktural dalam masyarakat plural. Studi ini berkontribusi pada wacana hermeneutika Islam, etika sosial, dan teologi pembebasan dengan menawarkan model konseptual yang menghubungkan interpretasi teks keagamaan dengan komitmen terhadap keadilan sosial dan martabat manusia.

INTRODUCTION

Since the revelation of the Qur'an in the lives of Muslims, the debate and development of Islamic discourse has continued and led to various interpretations with a strong effort to always refer to the Qur'an. Objectively, the Qur'an contains truths that

can be reached by reason. The Qur'an has two characteristics, namely centrifugal, which opens wide opportunities for interpreters to search and find the meaning of its verses and centripetal, which is always the main reference point of various interpretations that develop. Although Islamic discourse has been going on for centuries and has produced various interpretations of the Qur'an (Said, 2020).

The Qur'an was originally born responding to the social conditions of Arab society. However, its meaning remains relevant to people outside of Arabia provided that the interpretation takes into account the historical context in which the Qur'ān was revealed (Wijaya, 2009). The process of interpreting the Qur'ān is a reflection of personal experience and continuous interaction that is never – ending in nature (Misrawi, 2010). In hermeneutic studies, the process of translation, interpretation, and understanding of texts always involves three main subjects: the author, the text, and the reader (Said, 2020). Hermeneutics is a tool used to interpret the Qur'an and other texts to reveal the implied and explicit meaning in the text, especially in the modern era, it is not uncommon for Muslims to be faced with life problems that are not only related to religious issues but also social issues.

Muslim scholars consider that there are similarities between hermeneutics and the process of interpretation in Islam and even the concepts of both are similar, although they are in different appearances. There are differences between hermeneutics and tafsir in some aspects, but both have the same goal, which is to help the reader get an interpretation that suits his subjectivity from the text he reads (Aisyah, 2016).

This paradigm arises because of the contextual awareness in which each person or certain socio – cultural communities behave and reason in accordance with the context of their lives. In addition, this paradigm is also influenced by the awareness of progressivity, namely awareness of the dynamics and development of life. The era of modernity has seen many changes in the social life of society and this is a challenge for Muslims in dealing with it, a deep understanding of the intricacies of Islam is an important thing that must be considered with a conscious and systematic effort, including understanding in Islam concerning texts and social life which of course must be continuously developed so that it has a wealth of findings that are useful for scientific existence and for society (sLabib, 2022).

The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of knowing and respecting each other as found in QS. Al – Hujurat: 13. Contextualization in interpreting the Qur'an plays an important role in overcoming challenges that arise today such as the challenges of pluralism, ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. These challenges form the basis of the problem of building a just and inclusive social system.

The hermeneutic approach in studying the Qur'an aims to produce productive understanding and explore contextual meanings that are in line with the universal spirit of the Qur'an, such as the values of freedom, justice, equality, and human rights (Said, 2020). The understanding of scripture is greatly influenced by the interpreter's intention, psychological condition, audience background, life experience, social situation, and ideology (Iswahyudi, 2012). In interpreting Qur'anic verses, understanding verses related to the social life of the community provides an opportunity for interpreters to conduct studies and criticism which means entering the realm of human science. Studies and criticism open up opportunities for understanding the Qur'an to always be open to change.

Nowadays, religious texts often do not answer the problems faced by Muslims because religious texts tend to be used as a source of guidance that is not in context with the present. The problems faced by the ummah today are oppressive, unequal,

inhumane social realities that have sprung up a lot (Afandi, 2011). The fundamental question that can be raised is how is religious interpretation conceptually built? Which comes first, the word of God or man? Where should the interpretation of scripture begin in the midst of social and humanitarian problems that arise today, is it from the text or from the context? This is the question posed by Farid Esack (Esack, 2000).

Some previous studies related to this research include: Ammar Zainudin discusses conflicts that occur and are related to religion, and raises Farid Esack's discourse on hermeneutics which creates new thoughts in interpreting the Qur'an (Zainuddin, 2019). Muhammad Abdul Rozaq reveals the reality of dehumanization, injustice, marginalization, and the inevitable interpretation of history, applied using Esack's hermeneutic approach (Rozak, 2022). M. Fatih talked about the problem of religious pluralism in the current era faced with a series of new challenges such as internal or inter-religious conflicts. The issue of religious pluralism is about the diversity of truth claims that often lead to conflict. He examines this issue with Esack's hermeneutics (Fatih, 2020). While this research explores Farid Esack's thoughts on Hermeneutics and social movements and how to overcome social humanitarian problems that are happening in the current era, where Esack in revealing hermeneutic studies departs from the criticism he did on the hermeneutics of Fazlurrahman and Muhammad Arkhoun, Esack complemented the hermeneutics of the two figures, and then gave birth to his hermeneutic thoughts by looking at the conditions he was facing at that time.

Some previous studies have applied Esack's hermeneutics to analyze various social issues such as religious conflict, dehumanization, and pluralism. However, this study offers a fundamental novelty that lies in shifting the focus from the mere application of hermeneutics to an in-depth analysis of the intrinsic connection between Esack's hermeneutics and social movements. Specifically, the previous research used Esack's hermeneutics as an analytical knife to dissect social issues, while this research looks at the relationship between theory and action in Esack's thought as the main problem. emphasizing the liberation theology initiated by Esack with the aim of explicitly and formulating the methodological steps of Esack's hermeneutics as a systematic framework for social transformation. In this way, this research not only reveals the problem but also offers a solution procedure that is extracted directly from the core of Esack's thought.

This research is a library research that tries to reveal the ideas of a figure, namely Farid Esack. Esack's hermeneutic method brings out his thoughts on liberation theology as a movement in overcoming social problems. In order to make the discussion in this study more focused, the systematics that will be described are: Farid Esack's biography. This discussion is important to understand his socio-historical background, because a figure's thoughts are usually influenced by his life experiences. Furthermore, discussing Esack's hermeneutics, in which he seeks to build social solidarity by eliminating religious exclusivity that has the potential to cause division, as well as parsing social movements that emerge in response to these social problems. Then, discussing the liberation theology offered by Esack as a movement to overcome social problems that arise. This liberation theology awakens people from the perspective that life does not only include issues between humans and God but also humans with humans and humans with the environment. Currently, humanitarian issues need more attention and solutions to overcome them, therefore discussing theology should not only be theocentric but must move on to anthropocentric discussions.

FARID ESACK'S BIOGRAPHY

Maulana Farid Esack was born in 1959 in Cape Town, precisely in the suburb of Wynberg, South Africa. (Esack, 2000) Esack is an intellectual who experienced a childhood full of suffering and hardship. Esack grew up with six siblings and a mother who was left behind by her husband, so Esack and his siblings lived a challenging life in Bonteheuwel, a poor working class neighborhood for black people (Sudarman, 2017).

Esack had his primary and secondary education in Bonteheuwel. At the age of 9 he joined the Jama'ah Tabligh and by the time he was 10 he was teaching at the local Madrasah. In 1974 at the age of 15 he was arrested by the South African police for opposing the Apartheid regime. After his release he went to Pakistan on a scholarship and studied at the Islamic College Seminary from 1974–1982. In nine years he completed his education and earned a bachelor's degree in Islamic Theology and an additional degree in Sociology at Jami'ah al-Ulum al-Islamiyyah Karachi. After completing his education he returned to Africa because he could not stay away from his homeland which was struggling against the Apartheid system (Esack, 2004).

September 13, 1986 Esack took the stage at Johannesburg's Central Methodist Church to deliver a lecture amidst the chaotic atmosphere that dominated South Africa under the Apartheid regime. The talk was organized by the South African chapter of the World Conference on Religion and Peace. An international interfaith organization dedicated to promoting justice and peace through dialogue and religious solidarity. Esack was one of the leading representatives of the religious community in South Africa and played an important role in the struggle against the Apartheid system (Sezgin, 2020). During his stay in the country, Esack and a number of his colleagues built a religious-based political organization called The Call of Islam where he served as the national coordinator. Through this organization, Esack endeavored to formulate a distinctive and contextualized form of understanding Islam in accordance with the realities of South Africa (Muhtarom, 2015). In 1990, Esack earned a doctorate from the University of Birmingham in England and then continued his postdoctoral work in Hermeneutics in Frankfurt, Germany. All of this happened before South Africa progressed and finally enjoyed the independence and freedom that it does today (Zainuddin, 2019).

FARID ESACK'S HERMENEUTICS

The method for understanding Qur'anic interpretation is known as hermeneutics. The term is often associated with the figure Hermes in Greek mythology who was often assigned by the god Jupiter to deliver messages to humans. In the process, the language of the gods is translated into human language so that it can be understood. This process of transferring meaning is called hermeneutics which is closely related to interpretive activities. Likewise, in understanding the Qur'an, interpretation is needed which functions as a tool so that the meaning of its content can be studied in depth without detaching itself from its original meaning. (Mubarok, Sulaiman, & Mustaan, 2022)

Hermeneutics as a method of interpretation has three main forms: First, objective hermeneutics is an approach that seeks to understand the author's intent based on the context in which the text was written. Second, subjective hermeneutics which interprets meaning by considering the current situation, including object and subject hermeneutics. Third, liberation hermeneutics, which focuses more on real actions in everyday life with a focus on concrete actions and movements as a form of interpretation, not just discourse (Asnawan & Suherlan, 2023). Subsequently, these theories were developed by Muslim scholars who saw the need for new methods to

reinterpret the Qur'ān to make it relevant and able to answer the challenges of the times (Munir, 2020).

Esack's hermeneutics emerged as a form of criticism of previous hermeneutical approaches, namely the hermeneutics of Fazlurrahman and Arkhoun. The thinking of the two figures influenced him a lot, but he felt that their hermeneutics had not fully met his expectations (Zainuddin, 2019). Esack criticizes the hermeneutics of Fazlurrahman and Arkhoun, which he believes are still focused on the cognitive domain. According to Fazlurrahman, the ideal hermeneutic is one that is primarily concerned with the cognitive aspects of revelation. He then advocated a method of interpretation known as the double movement. But for Esack, if in Fazlurrahman's thinking hermeneutics is only limited to moral and cognitive concepts in religion, then for Esack hermeneutics should emphasize real actions for memory determined by the political context. For Esack, Fazlurrahman's hermeneutic approach is not enough to fulfill the complexity of hermeneutic tasks and the intellectual diversity inherent in it. He considers that Fazlurrahman overemphasizes the moral values of the Qur'an but pays insufficient attention to the structural roots of social injustice (Iswahyudi, 2012).

On the scientific side, Esack wants a paradigm shift in the study of the Qur'an as his predecessors did in support of hermeneutic –based studies. He views the classical interpretation of the Qur'an as irrelevant in the face of today's dynamic phenomena and the interpretation must be revised. Esack felt the need to present the Qur'an as a solution to the problems he was facing at the time, namely related to racism and oppression, so that the thoughts he presented related to these issues he termed liberation theology (Esack, 2000).

Further criticism is aimed at Arkoun's hermeneutics. According to Esack, Arkoun's hermeneutic approach is more of a basic heuristic framework that aims to reformulate Islamic knowledge and compare it with contemporary thought (Iswahyudi, 2012). The central point of Arkoun's hermeneutics lies in the close relationship between language, thought, and history (Lutfi, 2019). Esack criticizes Arkoun's view that knowledge is a layer of authority that is accepted and appreciated neutrally and independently of ideology. In contrast to Arkoun, Esack argues that knowledge, like other social tools, cannot be separated from the intentions and ideologies of its creators, so knowledge is not neutral. For Esack, the relationship between language, thought and history must be looked at more deeply, namely whether there are ideological layers in every historical narrative that influence the formation of thought and manifest in language, especially in the process of interpretation. Through his approach, Esack tries to complement the shortcomings he finds in the hermeneutics of Fazlurrahman and Arkoun. According to Esack, the task of Muslims is to read the Qur'an in its context, and moreover the sacred text will only have a strong meaning if it is associated with political interests and power (Iswahyudi, 2012).

Humans acquire knowledge through reason, the five senses, and imaginative abilities that play an active role through the heart. As referred to in the Qur'an as the objective partner of intellect based on the eyes of the heart. However, in today's context, revelation is often considered less relevant because it is considered as something traditional and even obsolete. This view is reinforced by a shift in discourse in contemporary Islamic thought, where rational approaches and intellectual readings are more dominant than making scripture the main source of knowledge. In general, the characteristics of contemporary Islamic thought place reason as the main foundation in the development of science that comes from scientific traditions and is seen from a historical aspect. As a result, the scriptures are often understood not as absolute

revelation but only as religious texts of the past. Hasan hanafi calls this condition turats (classical heritage) which is different from hadhrah, the reality faced by humans today (Permana, Zubaidi, Nuriz, Khakim, & Mumtazi, 2022).

As with hermeneutics in general, Esack views that there are three main elements in the process of understanding the text that together form a hermeneutic circle (Ritonga & Lahmi, 2020). *First*, in liberation hermeneutics, the meaning of the text is closely related to the functionalist approach to the text. In the framework of language as a form of discourse and social practice, interpretation is not only limited to analyzing the text or the process of interpretation but must also pay attention to the relationship between the text, the process of interpretation, and social conditions. This includes contextual situations as well as institutional conditions and broader social structures. *Second*, context. One of the distinctive features of Esack's version of transmission hermeneutics is its alignment with the reality of oppressed communities in South Africa. For Esack, the issue of hermeneutics must be seen from the point of view of for whom and in what interest an interpretation is done (Munir, 2020). *Third*, the interpreter. In the process of interpreting the text, the interpreter is in two domains, namely the interpreter's own activities and the rules that limit him. The activity of interpretation involves the personal involvement of the interpreter as well as the context of space and time in which he is located. Meanwhile, the rules of interpretation include provisions related to the text and the rules used to understand it (Jabbar, 2013).

The hermeneutical method developed by Esack refers to two main currents in hermeneutics, namely hermeneutical theory and hermeneutical philosophy. Through these two approaches, Esack seeks to formulate his methodological position within the framework of the hermeneutical concept with the aim that a word or event that occurred in the past in the context of a particular time and culture can be understood and has existentially relevant meaning in the present context (Said, 2020). Esack has four main objectives. First, to show that one can remain faithful to the Qur'ān while adapting it to the context of today. Second, the idea of hermeneutically developing the Qur'ān as an important contribution to the advancement of a theology of pluralism in Islam. Third, it re-examines how the Qur'ān defines itself as well as others (whether believers or not) with the aim of opening up the space of truth for various parties within the framework of a theology of pluralism in order to achieve privacy. Fourth, to seek the relationship between religious exclusivism associated with political conservatism on the one hand (such as supporters of apartheid), and religious inclusivism in line with politics (supporters of liberation) (Ismail, 2017).

Farid Esack suggests a number of keys to liberation hermeneutics as a response to the social reality he faces. *First, Taqwa*. It is understood as a guard mechanism for interpreters not to be trapped in partisan interests. *Second, Tauhid*. It is used as a unifying basis that rejects all forms of dualism and discrimination, especially those based on race. *Third, Al-Nas*. Reflects the principle of human creation as a caliph on earth which demands recognition of the equal dignity of all humans in a neutral manner. *Fourth, Mustad'afin fi al-ardh*. Describes the active involvement of the interpreter in approaching the text consciously, in search of meanings that are able to respond creatively to the suffering of the oppressed with a strong commitment to the values of justice and liberation. *Fifth, Adl* and *Qist* emphasize that in the context of injustice the interpreter must position the Qur'an as an ideological instrument to carry out comprehensive resistance to all forms that exist. *Sixth, Jihad*. Understood as a hermeneutical principle that departs from the assumption that human life is active and

praxis, while theological aspects arise as a result of these actions. In relation to social transformation, a Qur'anic verse is often quoted which states that God will not change the fate of a people unless they themselves change it. This underlines that true change takes place in the realm of history and human social life (Esack, 2000).

All of Esack's hermeneutical keys are intended to show how his interpretive framework functions, especially in explaining the dynamic interaction between the sacred text and the social context, as well as the ongoing reciprocity between the two. The principles of *Taqwa* and *Tauhid* serve as moral and theological foundations that shape the perspective of understanding the Qur'an, especially verses relating to religious pluralism and interfaith solidarity. Meanwhile, *al-nas* and *Mustad'afun fi al-ardh* emphasize the importance of paying attention to the social and historical background where interpretation takes place. Meanwhile, *'Adl-Qist* and *Jihad* reflect the method and spirit of resistance that includes a contextual approach to divine revelation, especially in societies that experience injustice and betrayal (Umam, 2014).

In addition to applying the six main keys, the distinctiveness of Esack's hermeneutics also appears in how he places the process of interpretation within the hermeneutical framework, both objective and subjective (Rahman, 1985). The existence of the text in the process of interpretation is determined by its ability to make changes that can shift the perspective on the text. Farid Esack instead places interpretation as the center point that focuses on a particular text and how the text responds to the social context faced by the interpreter. This also determines the extent to which the text has relevance in the current situation. The main goal is to explore new meanings that suit the needs and specific conditions of the interpreter or reader in social, political and cultural aspects (Umam, 2014).

As can be seen from his Qur'anic approach, Esack interprets the Qur'an and places himself in the struggle of the oppressed. The Qur'anic text is interpreted by tracing the layers of history in depth, based on the idea of the special position of the oppressed before God. Reading texts and social reality from the perspective of the *mustad'afun* in order to be more aware of humanitarian attitudes and closer to them, the goal is to contribute effectively to the Qur'an in the struggle of South African society. With the background of the conditions that occurred, Esack had a strong spirit to fight for justice and believed that God was just and sided with the oppressed, in accordance with his words in QS. Muhammad: 7

"O you who believe, if you help Allah, He will help you and strengthen your position".

According to him, the verse means that he should contribute to the fight for liberation and justice. The word "He" in the verse is interpreted as His religion. So to get God's help, one must fight for religious values, in this case related to the issues of liberation and justice in the struggle that he is conducting together with the people of South Africa. He applied this in a movement he founded, the Call of Islam, which was affiliated with the UDF (United Democratic Front) to fight apartheid. From here he then initiated the discourse of liberation (Esack, 2000).

Esack's hermeneutics has its own characteristics. In general, hermeneutics only focuses on understanding the text, reality, and the relationship between the two. Esack's approach goes beyond that by addressing the importance of reality transformation. In other words, Esack's hermeneutics is not merely theoretical but action-oriented. He does not only use an objective or subjective approach in his interpretation, but also emphasizes that the new meaning resulting from interpretation should be able to

encourage positive social change. This interpretation is meant to be implemented in real life, becoming a spiritual driver that can trigger revolutionary movements towards a more just and humane society (Umam, 2014).

THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION

Esack sets some basic principles as the initial foundation for the development of his hermeneutic. The first principle, Qur'anic revelation, in which God as the supreme entity acts in all affairs that include the world and humans. God as the owner of the message is seen with the Prophets as gradual recipients of revelation. This reflects the creative and progressive interaction between God's will, reality and human needs. The progressiveness of revelation has 2 characteristics, namely as a guide to life and as a form of the birth of Islam during the struggle of the Prophet Muhammad SAW who needed the Qur'an as a guide and moral support in his struggle. Second, the cause behind the revelation. Modern hermeneutics divides this cause into two parts, namely general causes related to the state of society when the Prophet was sent, oppression of the weak, capitalism, and slavery racism. While special causes are related to specific causes for certain verses. Third, contextualization. One must look at the facts or situation when the verse was revealed because a particular verse is generally revealed in a particular social context. As the Muslim community expands, Qur'anic verses also follow the changing situations and conditions (Asnawan & Suherlan, 2023).

For Farid Esack, theology should not only focus on issues of divinity, heaven, hell, and the like. He criticizes theological approaches that discuss God too much, a substance that essentially does not require human intervention, because it is only considered a form of theology that is futile and only drains the energy of the people excessively. According to him, the ideal theology is theology that is realized in real action, not just used as a means to achieve individual piety alone (Esack, 2000).

The Qur'ān exists with the hope of transforming an age of ignorance into a peaceful civilization where every human being whether male or female, black or white, must be treated well, treated humanely. Reading the Qur'an with today's social dynamics and all its complicated problems needs to be discussed. Especially with the various issues of oppression that have emerged, alienation of minorities that are very worrying, it is important to find a way to solve them (Mubarok et al., 2022).

Esack is known for his concept of liberation theology as well as his application of hermeneutics. Nowadays, injustice and discrimination occur in almost every part of the world. The challenges facing the world today are ethnic – religious intolerance, notions of racial superiority, and inter – and intra – religious conflict. Herein lies the purpose of liberation theology in Islam. Liberating humanity from confusion, injustice, oppression, liberating from racism which is the worst kind of evil. It occurs in almost every society and creates social problems and hatred between social classes. According to the Qur'an the main purpose of liberation theology is to provide help to people in need, favoring the weak regardless of race or religion. God gives equal rights to every individual so that all are treated and judged equally (Abdul Rehman, 2017).

Liberation theology is defined by Esack as an attempt to liberate religion from social, political and religious structures and ideas that demand absolute obedience towards the freedom of all human beings from all forms of injustice and oppression in terms of ethnicity, gender, social class and religion. Liberation theology seeks to achieve its goals through a free and participatory process. The inspiration for the emergence of this idea of liberation theology refers to the Qur'an and the Prophet's struggle. Understanding the Qur'an and the Prophet's example in a shared and continuous

process of theological reflection for the sake of increasing comprehensive liberation praxis (Esack, 2000).

According to Esack's view, liberation theology aims to liberate humans from various forms of injustice and betrayal, whether related to race, gender, social class, or religion. It also seeks to liberate religion itself from oppressive social, political, and religious structures and ideas that do not open space for critical attitudes.

Farid Esack offers a standard of transmission interpreted within an Islamic framework through several approaches. *First*, he brings a general measure of human values that includes the integrity and guarantees the life of each individual. In this case, freedom is closely related to human rights that should not be hindered or deprived by anyone, either through social systems or belief systems. Therefore, oppressive, discriminatory and unjust structures are considered a violation of human rights. *Second*, Esack does not view protection solely as an act of liberation, but also as a process that encourages awareness of injustice as the main enemy of humanity. *Third*, efforts to criticize injustice and guarantee guarantees must depart from the concrete reality where injustice occurs. *Fourth*, the practice of enlightenment theology in Islam according to Esack is not built from external principles but is embedded in the teachings of Islam itself, namely the Qur'an and hadith as the main source of the Islamic teachings (Nadia, 2012).

The social issues that Esack looks at in terms of implementing liberation hermeneutics in practice can be seen in his struggle for social justice. Esack uses the Qur'an as a foundation to fight against the system of injustice. He also highlights the issue of gender equality, rejecting patriarchal interpretations that often discriminate, especially women who are often victimized. Esack encourages interfaith cooperation to fight oppression, believing that interfaith solidarity is an important part of the implementation of Qur'anic values (Salaeh, 2025).

Esack's liberation theology is an idea he came up with in voicing justice, responding to the problems faced by African society, namely triple oppression (apartheid, patriarchy, and capitalism), at that time the religionists also had a conservative theology which caused no change at all. African society at that time was discriminated against and did not receive justice. Esack wanted the oppressed to work together regardless of their ethnic, racial or religious differences in opposition to apartheid and conservative theological understanding. Then Esack gave birth to an idea, namely liberation theology to fight for justice (Esack, 2000). In this case Esack uses a Qur'anic approach, he interprets the Qur'an and places himself in the struggle of the oppressed. The Qur'anic text is interpreted by tracing historical developments in depth based on the idea of the primary position of the oppressed in the view of God and the prophetic message. When reading the text and social reality from the perspective of the *mustad'afun*, the humanitarian consciousness becomes closer, which contributes effectively to the Qur'ān in the struggle of the oppressed (Nafi'ah, 2024).

Through liberation theology, Esack's hermeneutical keys are used as tools to equip interpreters to understand the message of the Qur'an. According to him, interpretations can be different as long as they do not hit the six keys (Mubarok et al., 2022). In realizing liberation theology, the first step is to contextualize the text. Although the reading of the text is contextual, the universality of the Qur'an remains and is not lost. Second, Esack believes that the process of interpretation is influenced by the place where the interpreter is, such as Esack who connects the text with the South African context and wants to fight for a liberative mission. Third, the Qur'ān shows evidence

that scripture needs to be understood through practice rather than mere doctrine or dogma. Fourth, Qur'anic theology and liberation are parallel processes. The idea of hermeneutics stemming from the solidarity of faith and the excavation of Qur'anic meaning offers a path to liberative practice and plays a role in transforming lives (Esack, 2000).

The form of solving current social problems by using Farid Esack's liberation hermeneutics can be seen, among others, regarding Islam as a tool of social emancipation which is one of the main pillars of his discussion of liberation theology. Islam must be understood and practiced as a liberating force from all forms of individual and structural oppression. Islam should not be excluded from socio – political reality, the Qur'an is not only a spiritual guide but also a text that must be actively dialogued in the context of the struggle against injustice and oppression. According to Esack, many Muslims are trapped in a ritualistic approach that separates personal piety and social piety. This results in the teachings of Islam being unable to become a liberating force in people's lives, especially oppressed communities. The reading of the Qur'an in the context of the apartheid struggle gives deep meaning as a text that sides with the oppressed (Lutfi, 2019).

This thinking makes Islam not just a normative teaching but a practical force. In Indonesia, Esack's thinking inspired many progressive Islamic movements, making religion a source of motivation to defend marginalized groups. Such as the Gusdurian movement, Progressive Islam, and the transmission Pesantren network in various regions show that Islam becomes a force for social change when understood contextually. The same can also be seen in social movements carried out by organizations such as the Wahid Foundation, Fahmina Foundation, which make Islamic values the ethical basis for advocating justice and equality (Wahid Foundation, 2020).

Overcoming these social problems in the present has emerged many social movements that fight for justice and social welfare in society. As in gender issues today, many gender activists have sprung up who are fighting for equality to uphold justice, starting the opening of dialogue spaces that always open space for discussions related to gender inequality issues that occur and together exchange ideas and opinions to overcome the problems that occur. In the dialog that is carried out, Esack's hermeneutic method is still relevant to be used as a method in studying this phenomenon (Renci, 2023).

Esack also addresses issues related to interfaith solidarity in social movements. He states that siding with the oppressed is a more authentic form of faith than just formal allegiance to religious teachings, as found in QS. Al – Hujurat: 13, which states that human diversity is part of God's will and QS. Al – Baqarah: 177, states that benevolence is a concrete action towards the poor, orphans, and the oppressed. For Esack, interfaith solidarity is not just social tolerance but an expression of *Maqasid al-Syari'ah*, namely preserving the soul, dignity and justice (Esack, 2000). In Indonesia, a manifestation of social concern in this regard can be seen from the cooperation between Islamic organizations and interfaith institutions on social issues such as the advocacy movement for religious tolerance, interfaith humanitarian action that is active in developing spaces for dialogue and joint action in line with the principle of interfaith solidarity against oppression.

Religion can easily slip into an exclusive and oppressive ideology if there is no openness to plurality. Therefore, Esack appreciates that the Qur'anic recitation is not only tolerant but also committed to a joint interfaith struggle to uphold universal human values (Esack, 2000).

Thus, liberation theology formulated by Farid Esack is a form of theology that favors oppressed groups, the result of theological reflection aimed at encouraging the process of liberation. In this framework, theology does not only discuss the issue of divinity, but also must be progressive in line with the nature of the revelation itself. Therefore, theology can be used as a basis for real action in social life. The idea of liberation theology developed by Esack is a reflection of his reflection on the Qur'an, which he considers to be a progressive revelation. In addition, the hermeneutical framework he built becomes an important methodology in trying to understand the meaning of the Qur'an. Esack emphasizes that in understanding the Qur'an, it is necessary to pay attention to its historical aspects and the dynamics of the development of human history.

CONCLUSIONS

The liberation hermeneutics developed by Farid Esack has become one of the most influential and incendiary approaches in contemporary Islamic discourse. Esack emphasizes that true liberation theology can only be realized when oppressed groups are able to voice their experiences and aspirations freely and creatively in society as God's creatures. Esack lays the foundation of his hermeneutics on a theological framework, a move that is considered very appropriate. Various terms of the basic values of the text as well as the active role of the interpreter as part of social reality are important components in supporting the idea of this transmission theology. With a hermeneutic approach, theology is no longer limited to divine issues but becomes a tool of struggle for marginalized groups. This theology model becomes very relevant in the midst of a global situation that tends to ignore human values.

Hermeneutics is an interesting study to be studied as a tool for interpreting sacred texts and other texts to reveal the implied and explicit meanings contained therein. Moreover, in the modern era it is not uncommon for Muslims to face life problems that are not only related to social issues but also religious. Through his hermeneutics, Farid Esack provides a method in interpreting the Qur'an so that it is relevant to the current context faced by humans. Because he understands that the Qur'an is a guideline revealed by God so that humans live life correctly and regularly, the contents of the Qur'an are in accordance with the development of situations and conditions. However, to analyze the verses of the Qur'an, it is necessary to have a method so that it can remain relevant to human life today. Through the hermeneutics that he offers, he uses it to reveal the context contained in the Qur'an.

The liberation theology built by Farid Esack is a theology for the marginalized as a result of thinking in theology aimed at liberation. So that theology does not only speak in the area of divinity but also must have a progressive nature as the concept of revelation. Thus, theology can be a foothold for social praxis. The liberation theology initiated by Farid Esack is an implication of his view of the Qur'an which he says is a progressive revelation, as well as his hermeneutic building as a very important methodology to be carried out in the context of activities that study the meaning of the Qur'an. In this case Esack emphasizes the study of the Qur'an by resting on the historicity of the Qur'an and considering the developments of human history.

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