

**THESIS**  
**DOCTRINE OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM**  
**IN THE TEACHING OF THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY**



**UNIDA**  
**GONTOR**  
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**1439/2018**



UNIDA  
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**DOCTRINE OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM  
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**THESIS**

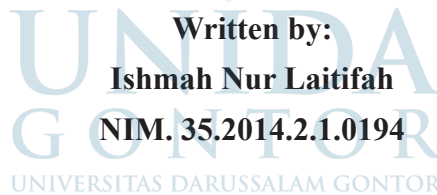
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Department of Comparative Study of Religion

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1439/2018**



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To Honorable,  
Dean of Ushuluddin Faculty  
University of Darussalam Gontor  
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*Bismillahirrahmanirrahim  
Assalamualaikum Wr.Wb.*

With honour,

I present this thesis written by:

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The Title : **Doctrine of Religious Pluralism in The Teaching of  
Theosophical Society**

It has been processed and corrected to meet the partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Licentiate (S1) in Comparative Study of Religion in the Faculty of Ushuluddin. Therefore, we expect that the thesis could be examined.

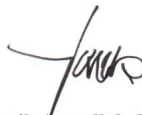
Hopefully, this thesis would be useful for religion, nation and the development of educational institution.

*Wassalamu 'alaikum Wr.Wb.*

Siman, Sya'ban 21, 1439

May 7, 2018

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**CERTIFICATION**

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Day/Date : Saturday/ May 12, 2018

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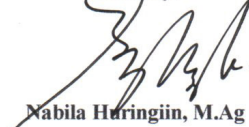
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Declare that this thesis is the result of my own research, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that this has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at University of Darussalam Gontor or other institutions. When, otherwise found that this is a plagiarism, I am already to accept any punishment according to academic regulations of university.

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(Ishmah Nur Laitifah)



# **DOKTRIN PLURALISME AGAMA DALAM AJARAN MASYARAKAT THEOSOFI**

**Ishmah Nur Laitifah**

35.2014.2.1.0194

## **ABSTRAK**

Doktrin pluralisme agama dewasa ini menjadi salah satu isu pemikiran yang begitu populer dalam diskursus keagamaan, dan kian menyebar ke tengah-tengah kehidupan umat beragama. Paham ini mengajarkan bahwa semua agama sama-sama benar dan merupakan jalan yang sah untuk menuju Tuhan yang sama. Dalam pandangan kaum pluralis, agama apapun tidak berhak mengklaim bahwa agamanya yang paling benar. Paham dan ajaran serupa ternyata telah diyakini dan diajarkan oleh sebuah organisasi kebatinan yang menamakan dirinya sebagai Masyarakat Theosofi pada sekitar akhir abad ke-19. Masyarakat Theosofi menafikan klaim kebenaran absolut agama, bagi mereka tidak ada agama yang lebih tinggi daripada kebenaran, kebenaran adalah milik semua agama. Theosofi bertujuan untuk mendamaikan agama-agama, aliran-aliran dan bangsa-bangsa di bawah sebuah sistem etika umum berdasarkan pada kebenaran-kebenaran abadi, serta bercita-cita untuk mewujudkan sebuah persaudaraan kemanusiaan universal.

Berangkat dari permasalahan di atas, peneliti mencoba untuk mengungkap kesamaan antara doktrin pluralisme agama dengan ajaran yang diyakini oleh masyarakat theosofi. Dimana dalam penelitiannya, peneliti hendak merujuk pada teori pluralisme agama dalam kacamata cendekiawan muslim, Anis Malik Thoha, yang mengklasifikasikannya ke dalam empat tren pluralisme agama: humanisme sekuler; teologi global; sinkretisme; dan hikmah abadi.

Untuk mencapai hasil yang dimaksud, penelitian yang dilakukan adalah jenis penelitian kualitatif dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif-analisis. Yakni, peneliti akan memaparkan ajaran-ajaran yang diyakini oleh Masyarakat Teosofi, kemudian menganalisa dan mengungkap kemiripan yang terdapat antara ajaran-ajaran dalam Masyarakat Teosofi dengan doktrin pluralisme agama.

Dalam penelitian ini, peneliti menemukan dan melihat adanya kesamaan antara ajaran-ajaran yang diyakini oleh Masyarakat Teosofi dengan doktrin pluralisme agama. Paham humanism sekuler ditemukan pada inti ajaran teosofi yang menjunjung tinggi nilai-nilai universal kemanusiaan tanpa memandang superioritas keagamaan. Teosofi juga meyakini bahwa praktik ibadah setiap agama yang berbeda pada hakikatnya menuju Tuhan yang sama, sebagaimana yang dianut oleh pengusung ide teologi global. Pada dasarnya, teosofi juga menganut ajaran sinkretisme agama dan mencampur berbagai kebijaksanaan kuno agama-agama besar dunia. Selain itu, teosofi bertujuan untuk melegitimasi kebenaran semua agama dan menyatakan bahwa setiap agama berbeda hanya dalam level eksoterik (luar), namun sejatinya semua agama memiliki kesamaan pada level esoterik (batin), hal ini serupa dengan ajaran hikmah abadi dan kesatuan transenden agama-agama.

Akhirnya, peneliti menilai masih banyak kekurangan yang terdapat dalam kajian ini, sehingga peneliti mengharapkan adanya masukan dan koreksian dari pembaca demi tercapainya hasil dan nilai yang lebih baik. Peneliti berharap kajian ini dapat bermanfaat bagi para pembaca dan bagi penelitian yang akan datang.

# **DOCTRINE OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM IN THE TEACHING OF THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY**

**Ishmah Nur Laitifah**

35.2014.2.1.0194

## **ABSTRACT**

Nowadays, the doctrine of religious pluralism has become one of the popular issues in the discourse of religion, and was increasingly spreading to the midst of religious life. This idea teaches that all religions are equally true and are a legitimate way leads to the same God. In pluralists view, any religion shall not be able to claim that his religion is the only true. The similar understand and teaching had appeared and been taught by an occult organization namely The Theosophical Society at about the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Theosophical Society denied the absolute truth claims of religion, for them there is no religion higher than truth, but the truth is belong to all religions. Theosophy aims to reconcile religions, sects and nations under a common system of ethics based on eternal truths, and aspires to create a nucleus of universal human brotherhood.

Based on the above problem, the researcher try to uncover and reveal the similarity between the doctrine of religious pluralism with the teaching of the Theosophical Society. Where in this research, the researcher refer to the theory of religious pluralism according to a Muslim scholar, Anis Malik Thoha, which classifies them into four trends of religious pluralism: the secular humanism; global theology; syncretism; and sophia perennis.

To achieve the intended result, this research is a qualitative research by using descriptive-analytic method, which the researcher should describe the teaching that believed by the Theosophical Society, then analyze and uncover the similarity between its teaching with the doctrine of religious pluralism.

In this study, the researcher found the similarities between the teaching of the Theosophical Society with the doctrine of religious pluralism. The idea of secular humanism match to the core teaching of theosophy that uphold the universal values of humanity regardless of religious superiority. Theosophy also believed that any religious practices of different religions are essentially strive to the same God, and this is much in line with the idea of global theology. Basically, theosophy also adheres to the teaching of religious syncretism and mixing of various ancient wisdom of the great religions of the world. Furthermore, theosophy aims to legitimize the truth of all religions and states that every religion differ only in the level of exoteric (outer), but actually have in common at the level of esoteric (inner), this is so similar to the teaching of sophia perennis and transcendent unity of religions.

Finally, the researcher assessed many shortcomings inherent in this study, due to that some corrections and suggestions are expected from the readers for the sake of the better achievement of results and values. The researcher hopes this study can be useful for the readers and for the next research.

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## MOTTOES

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ ۖ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ  
بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعِيًّا بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ  
الْحِسَابِ

### آل عمران ﴿١٩﴾

Surely the (true) religion with Allah is Islam, and those to whom the Book had been given did not show opposition but after knowledge had come to them, out of envy among themselves; and whoever disbelieves in the verses of Allah then surely Allah is quick in reckoning.

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيَاطِينَ الْإِنْسِ وَالْجِنِّ يُوحِي  
بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُورًا وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ مَا فَعَلُوهُ  
فَذَرَهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾

### الأنعم ﴿١١٣﴾

And thus did We make for every prophet an enemy, the Syaithans from among men an jinn, some of them suggesting to others varnished falsehood to deceive (them), and had your Lord pleased they would not have done it, therefore leave them and that which they forge.



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the name of Allah, the most Merciful, the most Beneficent, praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, the King of the universe, the Owner of the day hereafter. Pray and peace be upon the last Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), his family, companions, and his entire followers.

By the mercy and blessing of Allah the Almighty, I could possible accomplish the writing of this humble thesis. Therefore, in this occasion, I should like to extend my deeply gratitude to those whom help greatly in the course of graduate study at University of Darussalam Gontor. And I wish to express my thanks and appreciation due to:

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5. The Head of Department of Comparative Study of Religion, Mr. Asep Awwaludin, M.Ag.
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Finally, May Allah bless us in our life now and hereafter.



Siman, Sya'ban 21, 1439

May 7, 2018

Researcher,

**Ishmah Nur Laitifah**

NIM. 35.2014.2.1.0194



## DEDICATION

I dedicated my humble work to:

My lovely parents, mom and dad

My great father Mr. Eden Deni Yayan and my best mother Mrs. Dede Komalasari

Who never stop praying for me, I could never have done this without your support and constant encouragement, hopefully Allah always save them for me, my sister and my brothers.

My lovely siblings, my brothers Azfar Nasrullah and Muhammad Yusuf Firdaus, and my little sister Rosyifah Nur Syafawani, thanks for the whole support, motivations that made me stronger than before. Wish you all be better than me.

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And finally for my beloved campus

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background Of Study

Nowadays, the understanding of religious pluralism has been a popular social issue either for civitas academia or religionist.<sup>1</sup>This issue is a phenomenon that is present in the midst of the multiplicity conflict of absolute truth claims among religions.<sup>2</sup>it is increasingly spreading in the midst of all walks of life and should be an inevitable fact and social phenomenon.

This idea of religious equality, seems at first glance as a promising solution of noble humanitarian hopes and values.<sup>3</sup> This belief implies the fall of barriers between religions, in which all religions can reconcile and walk together toward the salvation and truth that all human beings desire. This understanding preached a new view of the truth, that all religions are equally valid ways strives to the same God. Every religion, whatever and however the name and the form of worship are equally legitimate paths leading to the eternal truth and salvation.<sup>4</sup>Then the truth is seems not to be absolute, but so relative.

Regard to that such view, the Liberal Islamic group often say that Islam is not the only true religion. Ulil Abshar Abdalla, a former Coordinator of the Liberal Islam Association stated:

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<sup>1</sup> Umi Sumbulah and Nurjanah, *Pluralisme agama: Makna dan Lokalitas Pola Kerukunan Antarumat Beragama*, (Malang: UIN Maliki Press, 2013), p. 3

<sup>2</sup> Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Tinjauan Kritis*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 2007), p.1

<sup>3</sup> Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Tinjauan Kritis*, p. 3

<sup>4</sup> Adnin Armas (ed.), *Pluralisme Agama: Telaah Kritis Cendekiawan Muslim*, (Jakarta: INSIST, 2013), p. vi

“With no doubt, I say, all religions are precisely the same way, the way to the Right One. All religions in such a way are true, with different degrees and levels of depths in living the way of religiosity. All religions are equal to the same great family: the lovers of the way to an endless truth”.<sup>5</sup>

According to another prominent, Nurcholish Madjid, he argues that the talk of the Abrahamic religious tradition – as an intersection between Semitic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) –has become an inevitable subject and even a necessary. These three religions have been in a sociological condition that meets each other’s equal.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, for Frithjof Schuon, the core of all religions is found in a transcendent reality.<sup>7</sup> He elaborates that the celestial religions are different only in the exoteric aspect, but have the same inner element.<sup>8</sup> Then to see this universal point of intersection, one must turn from the exoteric aspect to the esoteric areas of religion.

Some of the religious pluralism bearers are increasingly trying to spread this understanding to various circles. They come and offer many concepts that essentially teach the idea of religious pluralism. As Rene Guenon, Frithjof Schuon, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr who are the pluralist transcendentalist, John Hick and Wilfred Cantwell Smith as pluralist who initiated the idea of Global Theology,<sup>9</sup> as well as other. The bearers of religious pluralism seem to offer the tranquility of the soul, peace, and

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<sup>5</sup> Ulil Abshar Abdalla, *Menyegarkan Kembali Pemahaman Islam*, on *Kompas*, Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> of November, 2002. p. 4

<sup>6</sup> See the preface of NurcholisMadjid on his book, *Tiga Agama SatuTuhan*, (Bandung: Mizan, 1998), p. xvi

<sup>7</sup> See the preface of Huston Smith for *The Transcendent Unity of Religion*, (USA: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1984), p. xxiii

<sup>8</sup> M. Legenhausen, *Pluralitas dan Pluralisme Agama*, (Jakarta: Shadra Press, 2010), p. 144

<sup>9</sup> Adnan Aslan, *Religious Pluralism in Christian and Islamic Philosophy: The Thought of John Hick and SeyyedHossein Nasr*, (U.K: Curzon Press, 1994), p. xii

immortality. However actually this idea contains many problems, including the theological problems.<sup>10</sup> There is a vague doctrine of truth and salvation within it.

This understanding of religious pluralism succeeded in spreading and penetrating human thought through the role of organizations and movements bearers of religious pluralism that is increasingly spread in different parts of the world. In the past, the similar doctrine has rapidly developed and spread by The Theosophical Society. As stated by Adian Husaini, “The spread of theosophical teachings since the time of colonialism in Indonesia was the seed of spreading the idea of religious pluralism.”<sup>11</sup>

Theosophical Society is a movement inspired by Jewish esoteric mysticism called Kabbala and Gnosticism, a secret science of salvation as Western occult forms. This movement also incorporates the principle of Eastern mysticism with Western esoteric thinking and aims to form a universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race (nation), belief, gender, and color.<sup>12</sup> Herman de Tollenaere stated in his book that The Theosophical Society claimed to bring its members and the world at large the fountainhead of truth behind all religions and sciences.<sup>13</sup> This is what later became one of the main purposes of the Theosophical Society.

On one side, the theosophical teaching seeks to develop a common understanding of all religions and to create a universal brotherhood by distinguishing the differences between those religions. However, of all that

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<sup>10</sup> Ahmad Khaerurrozikin, *Problem Sosiologis Pluralisme Agama di Indonesia*, on journal *Kalimah*. Vol. 13. No. 1. March 2015. Ponorogo: University of Darussalam (UNIDA)

<sup>11</sup> Adian Husaini, *Pluralisme Agama: Parasit bagi Agama-Agama (Pandangan Katolik, Protestan, Hindu dan Islam)*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (Jakarta: Media Dakwah, 2007), p. 47

<sup>12</sup> Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, (USA: Theosophical University Press, 1981), p. 5-7

<sup>13</sup> Herman A.O. de Tollenaere, *The Politics of Divine Wisdom: Theosophy and labour, national, and women's movements in Indonesia and South Asia (1875-1947)*, (Leiden: Universiteit Nijmegen, 1996), p. 1

ended in nullification of the absolute truth claims of each religion. As long as every religion serves serenity, brotherhood, and peace, then all religions are essentially the same. Theosophy also aims to make the humanism as the highest doctrine in life. The motto of this group is: “*There is no religion higher than truth*”.<sup>14</sup> Theosophy seems to stand beyond the religions and not favoring to any particular religion, because the truth becomes the most important thing for the theosophists life.

The organization of Theosophy and Freemasonry was once not permitted by the Government of Indonesia in the Reformation era, because it was considered as a foreign organization which not in line and incompatible with the character and national identities of Indonesia. But nowadays, the theosophists seek to reascent along with the spreading of the idea of religious pluralism and secular humanism. On behalf of the human right and freedom, they do their own interpretation towards the religious teachings based on their desire.<sup>15</sup>

Based on the above explanation, then the question arise: what are the teachings and doctrine contained in the teachings of the Theosophical Society? And what is the similarity between Theosophical teachings and the idea of religious pluralism? Thus, through this research the researcher wants to answer these questions by focusing on the discussion of the doctrine of religious pluralism in the Theosophical Society.

## 1.2 Problem of Study

Refer to the explanation above, the researcher intends to limit the problem and her discussion about **what is the similarity between the doctrine of religious pluralism with the teaching of Theosophical Society?**

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<sup>14</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 2010), p. 7

<sup>15</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 13



### **1.3 Purpose of Study**

Based on the background of study and the problem formulated as described above, so this study is purposed to reveal the similarity between the doctrine of religious pluralism with the teaching of Theosophical Society.

### **1.4 Significance of Study**

This study is expected to give a valuable contribution in the field of research especially for following significances:

#### **1.4.1 Theoretical Significance:**

- a. To be the main point for the next research which has relation to this study, as well as it could be the matter of discussion as the scientific information.
- b. As a scientific view to face and response the contemporary issues of religious thought.

#### **1.4.2 Practical Significance:**

To make a contribution of useful information for the readers and the researcher herself especially in the field of religious studies, and generally to be the reference for enriching the science treasure in Faculty of Ushuluddin at University of Darussalam Gontor.

### **1.5 Review of Literature**

#### **1.5.1 Previous Research**

There were several previous researches those examine theosophy and its relation to the history of Indonesian nationalism, but it had not found any similar results from previous researches that analyze about beliefs and teachings of The Theosophical Society that contain the idea of religious pluralism. The previous researches which discuss about theosophy or the doctrine of religious pluralism are as follow:

*First*, a thesis entitled **“Pengaruh Gerakan Yahudi Freemasonry dalam Penyebaran Pluralisme Agama”** written by Reza Laksana Prameswari,<sup>16</sup> in which the author limits her discussion about the influence of Freemasonry in the spread of religious pluralism. In this paper, the author has not discussed the doctrine of religious pluralism in The Theosophical Society specifically, which also has relevance and closely related to the Freemasonry Movement. Furthermore, the researcher intends to analyze the similarity between the doctrine of religious pluralism with the teachings of the Theosophical Society, which has not been studied in this paper.

*Second*, Iskandar P. Nugraha’s book titled **“Teosofi, Nasionalisme & Elite Modern Indonesia”**.<sup>17</sup> This book contains a study of the historical role of the Theosophical Movement in Indonesia that made many contributions to the creation of nationalism and the existence of modern elite Indonesian due to its contact with the educational movement, political movements, and women’s movement. However, the researcher have not found a detailed discussion about the doctrine of religious pluralism in the Theosophical Society inside this book, as will be examined by the researcher.

*Third*, a thesis entitled **“Pengaruh Gerakan Teosofi Yahudi di Masyarakat Indonesia”**, written by Mouldi Gumelar,<sup>18</sup> in which the author limits his study in the discussion of the influence of the Jewish Theosophical Movement among Indonesian society. Besides, in this paper there is no discussion that related to the doctrine of religious pluralism in the Theosophical Society. Therefore, the researcher

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<sup>16</sup> Published by Institute of Islamic Studies Darussalam (ISID), Ponorogo, Year 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Iskandar P. Nugraha, *Teosofi, Nasionalisme & Elite Modern Indonesia*, (Depok: Komunitas Bambu, 2011), p. ix

<sup>18</sup> Published by Institute of Islamic Studies Darussalam (ISID), Ponorogo, Year 2013.

intends to discuss further about the teachings of Theosophical Society and its relation to doctrine of religious pluralism.

*Fourth*, Media Zainul Bahri's book entitled "*Wajah Studi Agama-Agama: Dari Era Teosofi Indonesia (1901-1940) Hingga Masa Reformasi*".<sup>19</sup> This book contains several type of study for comparative religion in Indonesia. According to him, the study of comparative religion in Indonesia has been pioneered by Netherlands East Indies Theosophical Movements in the end of 19th century, which at the moment it was colored by the study that focus on looking for the intersection between religions for the sake of manifesting religious tolerance in a very plural condition in Indonesia. The author also examined the study of comparative religion in the new order to the Reformation era. In this book, the researcher did not find a discussion that focused on the teachings of theosophy and its correlation to the doctrine of religious pluralism. Therefore, through this research, the researcher attempts to uncover and analyze the similarities between the doctrine of religious pluralism with teachings believed by the Theosophical Society, as it has not been found in the previous study.

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### **1.5.2 Theoretical Framework**

Theosophical Society is an International movement and organization was first established in New York, USA in 1875 by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, an aristocratic Jewish Russian woman.<sup>20</sup> Blavatsky calls theosophy as "divine knowledge" or "divine science".<sup>21</sup> In 1879, Madam Blavatsky decided to leave for India and moved the center of Theosophical Society in Adyar and she began the study of Hindu

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<sup>19</sup> Media Zainul Bahri, *Wajah Studi Agama-Agama: Dari Era Teosofi Indonesia Hingga Masa Reformasi (1901-1940)*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2015), p. xiii-xv

<sup>20</sup> Iskandar P. Nugraha, *Teosofi, Nasionalisme & Elite Modern Indonesia*, p. 5

<sup>21</sup> Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 2

and Buddhist scriptures as a reference of doctrine. Then its teachings and rites were adopted as part of the Theosophical teaching.<sup>22</sup>The belief adopted from the Indian religion (Hinduism and Buddhism) is the doctrine of karma and reincarnation,<sup>23</sup> which later became one of theosophy's distinctive teachings.

The Theosophical Society assumes that all religions have a point of equality of truth. Even it claims that it is above all the truth. They do not side with any stream and are composed of members who seek the truth, they seek to promote universal brotherhood and serve humanity. All of that is reflected in the motto this organization, that is: "There is no religion higher than truth".<sup>24</sup>

With such view and mission, Theosophy means that it will be a fusion of religions or to be a group above or beyond the existing religions. This is in line with the doctrine of religious pluralism. Blavatsky also mentions the problem of esoteric (inner) and exoteric (outer) aspect of Ammonius teachings.<sup>25</sup> This term is then also used in one of the trends of religious pluralism which called "*the transcendent unity of religion*". That, the exist religions are only different at exoteric level, but will unite in its esoteric level.

To see the relationship between the teachings of The Theosophical Society to the doctrine of religious pluralism, the researcher intends to analyze it based on the theory of religious pluralism according to Anis Malik Thoha in which he classified the trends of religious

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<sup>22</sup> Susiyanto, *Teosofi dan Pelembagaan Aliran Kepercayaan*, on *Republika*, Thursday, 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2017, p. 19

<sup>23</sup> See Susiyanto and Fathurahman Kamal, "*Dari Teosofi Menuju Pluralisme Agama*". This article was published on the book of M. Amin Rais, M. Syukriyanto, et al., "*1 Abad Muhammadiyah: Istiqomah membendung Kristenisasi dan Liberalisasi*", on the congress of Muhammadiyah, Yogyakarta, 8<sup>th</sup> of July 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Teosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 4

<sup>25</sup> Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 6

pluralism into 4 categories: (i) secular humanism; (ii) global theology; (iii) syncretism, or eclecticism; and (iv) sophia perennis, or perennial philosophy. If it examined carefully, these four trends finally culminate in the same goal. It provides the equal legitimacy of existing religions, in order to coexist peacefully and safety life,<sup>26</sup> with tolerance and mutual aspect, and without any feeling of superiority from one religion to another.

Through the above discussion, the researcher aims to reveal and provide the core teaching of The Theosophical Society which related to the doctrine of religious pluralism. Therefore, in this study the researcher used the theological approach. The theological approach is an approach that emphasizes on the form or religious symbols, which each form or religious symbols claim to be the true while others are wrong. This approach is also looks at religion in terms of its teaching as the subject matter.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the researcher used this approach to attain the goal of this study by understanding the teaching of The Theosophical Society and its concept of God, as Blavatsky believed, as well as her disciples and the other theosophists did. Thus, this research is based on empirical facts that assist the researcher in understanding and reveal the similarity between the doctrine of religious pluralism with the teachings of The Theosophical Society.

## **1.6 Methodology of Study**

### **1.6.1 Design of Study**

To obtain the scientific data for this study, the researcher used the type of library research or literature, that is the research based on the collection, analysis, and data interpretation in the form of narrative

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<sup>26</sup> Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Tinjauan Kritis*, p. 3

<sup>27</sup> Abudin Nata, *Metodologi Studi Islam*, (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 2006),

and visual (not numerical) to gain a deep understanding of a particular phenomenon of interest.<sup>28</sup> Through this type of research, the researcher expects to obtain several data and deep understanding by reviewing the different books and other data sources to examine various information which are related to this research. This research conducted for four months. It began by collecting data from library, journal, books, and some articles. Then the researcher quoted and outlined them that needed and helpful for make a good arrangement to build an argument and analysis.

### **1.6.2 Object of Study**

The objects of this study are the doctrine of religious pluralism and the teaching of Theosophical Society. The deep understanding about both of the doctrine of religious pluralism and the core teaching of The Theosophical Society is needed for revealing the correlation and the similarity between them.

### **1.6.3 The Technique of Collecting Data**

Due to this thesis is literature research, then the researcher used the technique of documentation. Through this technique, the researcher collected several books, journals, articles, and other documents to derive the necessary data and finally attained the expected result. To get a valid data, the source in this research is divided into two divisions, the primary source and secondary source.

#### **a. Primary Sources**

To get the explanation about the teaching of Theosophical Society and the doctrine of religious pluralism, the researcher will deeply look at the following books:

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<sup>28</sup> Sutanto Leo, *Kiat Jitu Menulis Skripsi, Tesis, dan Disertasi*, (Jakarta: Penerbit Erlangga: 2013), p. 100

1. *The Key to Theosophy*, a book written by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. This book is one of the major works of the Theosophical Society founder that published to introduce the readers to theosophy and the Theosophical Society in an accessible question-and-answer format. It traces the broad outlines of theosophy, and explains its fundamental principles, meeting, and and at the same time, the various objections raised by the average Western enquirer, and endeavoring to present unfamiliar concepts in a form as simple and in language as clear as possible. The researcher refers to this book to have more explanation about the teaching of the Theosophical Society.
2. *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Tinjauan Kritis*, a book written by Anis Malik Thoha, he is one of a Muslim scholar. It consists of the detail discussion of the understanding of religious pluralism, and deeply examines the classification of four trends of religious pluralism according to the writer's thought. The researcher used this book as her basic view of this research.
3. *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Masa Reformasi*, a book written by Artawijaya, who did a research about the theosophical movement. From this book, we can find that the Theosophical Society has a close relationship to Freemasonry, which are both emphasizing the fraternity, equality and liberty. The researcher used this book to see the correlation between the basic principal of the Theosophical Society with the idea of religious pluralism.
4. *Pluralisme Agama: Telaah Kritis Cendekiawan Muslim*, this book was published by Institute for The Study of Islamic Thought and Civilization (INSISTS). It consists of some writings that briefly explain about the understanding of religious pluralism

in the thought and view some Muslim scholars. The researcher refers to this book to get the correct understanding of religious pluralism, especially in Islamic view.

b. Secondary Sources

Whereas the secondary resources are the sources derived from other books, working papers, journals, articles, website, etc. those are important and related to the topic of this research, such as:

1. *Teosofi, Nasionalisme Elite Modern Indonesia*, a book written by Iskandar P. Nugraha, published in Depok: Komunitas Bambu, 2011.
2. *The Ocean of Theosophy*, a book written by William Quan Judge, published by Theosophical University Press in California, 2011.
3. *The Transcendent Unity of Religion*, by Frithjof Schuon, published by The Theosophical Publishing House in USA, 1984.
4. *Tuhan Punya Banyak Nama*, John Hick's book that translated by Amin Ma'ruf and Taufik Aminuddin from *God Has Many Names*, published in Yogyakarta: Interfidei, 2006.
5. *Nalar Teosofis sebagai Basis Epistemologis Kajian Agama dan Pengetahuan*, an article written by Hammis Syafaqon journal *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam*, Vol. 3 No. 1, June.

#### 1.6.4 The Technique of Data Analysis

In this research, the method used by the researcher in analyzing the obtained data is by descriptive-analysis method, which is a kind of research that aims to make the description systematically, factually and accurately about the facts, properties and relationships between



the investigated phenomena.<sup>29</sup> In the study of analysis, the analysis is aimed at testing hypotheses and establishing a deeper interpretation of relations.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, the researcher used the descriptive method in this study to describe a religious phenomenon by explaining the teachings of Theosophical Society and the trends of religious pluralism. Then she tries to get the conclusion through the collected data, to analyze the doctrines of religious pluralism that found in the teaching of Theosophical Society.

### 1.7 System of Study

The next step was taken by the researcher, so that her research can run in an systematic order and the expected results is achieved, and then the readers will be able to understand it easily, the researcher compiles the chapters of this research as follows:

**Chapter One:** this chapter consists of background of study, problem of study, purpose of study, significance of study, literature review, theoretical framework, research methods and systematic discussion.

**Chapter Two:** this chapter is consist of two parts, the first part of a brief overview about theosophy, which includes the understanding of theosophy, the historical development of the theosophical society, and the purpose of the theosophical society. The second part explains the doctrine of religious pluralism which consists of the understanding of religious pluralism, the historical development of religious pluralism, and the theory of religious pluralism according to Anis Malik Thoha.

**Chapter Three:** in this chapter the researcher described and analyzed the doctrine of religious pluralism that found in the teachings of the theosophical society. The discussion is divided into parts, *first*: Secular

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<sup>29</sup> Moh. Nazir, *Metode Penelitian*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition, (Bogor: Ghalia Indonesia, 2014), p. 43.

<sup>30</sup> Moh. Nazir, *Metode Penelitian*, p. 75

Humanism; *second*: Global Theology; *third*: Syncretism, and *fourth*: Sophia Perennis/Perennial Philosophy.

**Chapter Four:** this chapter consists of the conclusion, suggestions and closing.



## CHAPTER TWO

### THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY AND RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

#### 2.1 The Theosophical Society

##### 2.1.1 Understanding The Theosophical Society

The term of 'theosophy' is so identic with the discourse of philosophy and mysticism. Refer to the English Dictionary, theosophy means any of several systems of philosophy which aim at a direct knowledge of God by means of spiritual ecstasy and contemplation.<sup>31</sup> According to Hammis Syafaq, the word 'theosophy', etymologically, is derived from Greece, "theos" and "shopia". *Theos* means God and *Sophia* meaning wisdom.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, if it is spelled out further, then the meaning is all of sciences, philosophy and lessons about the Divine Wisdom.

Historically, the term of 'theosophy' is indicated to *The Theosophical Society*, which was established first in New York in 1875 by a group of people who are involved in active learning of beliefs and ancient traditions in occult, mysticism and kabbalah. The founder and the central figure of this society is Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891), a female Jewish Russian aristocrat who was called by her fellow as The Mother of New Age Movement or The Founder of occult fraternities. Another prominents of theosophy are Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907), Annie Besant (1847-1933) and Charles Webster Leadbeater (1847-1934).<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> A.S Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 896

<sup>32</sup> Hammis Syafaq, "Nalar Teosofis sebagai Basis Epistemologis Kajian Agama dan Pengetahuan" on journal *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam*, Vol. 3 No. 1, Juni 2013, p. 22

<sup>33</sup> Hammis Syafaq, "Nalar Teosofis sebagai Basis Epistemologis Kajian Agama dan Pengetahuan" on journal *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam*, Vol. 3 No. 1, Juni 2013, p. 25

The real meaning of the term, as explained by its founder, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, is Divine Knowledge or Divine Wisdom. The word ‘theos’ means a God in Greek, one of the divine beings, certainly not “God” in the sense attached in our day to the term. Therefore, it is not “Wisdom of God” as translated by some, but Divine Wisdom such as that possessed by the Gods.<sup>34</sup>Blavatsky pointed out that the term ‘theosophy’ was inherited from about the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, and was introduced first by an Alexandrian philosopher, Ammonius Saccas, who was born as a Christian and was one of the Philaletheians community. Therefore Blavatsky said:

“It comes to us from the Alexandrian philosophers, called lovers of truth, Philaletheians, from phil means “loving” and aletheia means “truth”. The name Theosophy dates from the third century of our era, and began with Ammonius Saccas and his disciples, who started the Eclectic Theosophical system, and were also called Analogeticists.”<sup>35</sup>

The Eclectic Theosophical system aims to inculcate certain great moral truths upon its disciples, and all those who were “lovers of the truth”. Hence also the motto adopted by Theosophical Society: “*There is no religion higher than truth*” and it is called in sanskrit “*Satyan nasti pharoh dharma*”.<sup>36</sup>*Both are same in placing truth as the goal.*

*Eclectic Theosophy was divided under three heads: (1) Belief in one absolute, incomprehensible and supreme Deity, or infinite essence, which is the root of all nature, and of all that is visible and invisible. (2) Belief in man’s eternal immortal nature, which being a radiation of*

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<sup>34</sup> Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 2

<sup>35</sup> Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 1

<sup>36</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 43

*the Universal Soul, is of an identical essence with it. (3) Theurgy, or “divine work”, or producing a work of Gods; from theoi, “gods” and ergein, “to work”.*<sup>37</sup>

Another interpretation come from Charles W. Leadbeater. He stated that Theosophy is not a religion, but the truth which lies behind all religions alike. It is at once a philosophy, a religion, and a science. Furthermore, he explained:

“...from another point of view, we may surely say that it is at once a philosophy, a religion and a science. It is a philosophy, because it puts plainly before us an explanation of the scheme of evolution of both the souls and the bodies contained in our solar system. It is a religion in so far as, having shown us the course of ordinary evolution, it also puts before us and advises a method of shortening that course, so that by conscious effort we may progress more directly towards the goal. It is a science, because it treats both these subjects as matters not of theological belief but of direct knowledge obtainable by study and investigation.”<sup>38</sup>

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### **2.1.2 Historical Development of The Theosophical Society**

The history of Theosophical Society can not be detached from its relation to the influence of Freemason. In fact, the members of Freemason themselves who formed “The Theosophical Society”.<sup>39</sup> Bruce F. Campbell, in his book which entitled “*Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement*”, explained the

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<sup>37</sup> Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 2

<sup>38</sup> C. W. Leadbeater, *A Textbook of Theosophy*, (Auckland: The Floating Press, 2009), p. 4

<sup>39</sup> Adnin Armas, “*Freemason dan Gagasan Pluralisme Agama*”, an article presented in Masjid Kemang Pratama, Bekasi on May 12, 2007

relation between the influence of Freemason to the history of The Theosophical Society's formation.

He wrote, that on September 7, 1875 a Jewish Freemason called George Felt gave a lecture about "*The Lost Canon of Proportion of the Egyptians, Greek and Romans*" which describes the ancient science and occult (witchcraft), in the apartment of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's (1831-1891), a Jewish aristocrat Russia who leave her husband and wealth because of wandering into the mountains of Tibet for years.<sup>40</sup> George Felt focused his lecture on the mystical interpretation towards the lost traditions of the Egyptians.

One of the participants who followed the lecture, Henry Steel Olcott, a member of Freemason in New York, suggested that all participants (in round numbers 17 persons) who had attended the lectures of George Felt in order to form a group that would execute the deep examine about ancient traditions. The meeting by the time was dominated by the activists of Freemasonry. Blavatsky, who was Olcott's teacher – and previously was already interested in Kabbalah and occultism – then approve the proposal. Finally, on November 17, 1875, a meeting held by 18 persons (including George Felt).<sup>41</sup> Then the date was defined as the founding of The Theosophical Society.

Since it was formed by 18 members in New York, The Theosophical Society was later developed into an International organization. In 1897, the headquarter of The Theosophical Society was moved by H.P. Blavatsky from New York to Adyar in Madras, India.<sup>42</sup> It is recognized and acknowledged as a legal entity in Madras, India,

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<sup>40</sup> Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement*, (Berkeley: University of California Press), p. 28

<sup>41</sup> Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement*, p. 29

<sup>42</sup> Iskandar P. Nugraha, *Teosofi, Nasionalisme & Elite Modern Indonesia*, p. 5

on April 3, 1905. Refer to his explanation, the leader of Theosophy at that time said, “this association is not favoring any one flow and is composed of members who are seeking the truth, that try to promote brotherhood, and serve humanity.”<sup>43</sup> This state clearly showed that the Theosophical Society intended to stand above religions without favoring to any particular one.

At its inception, Colonel Henry Steel Olcott was requested to become the first President of Theosophy, accompanied by William Q. Judge as the secretary of the organization. While Blavatsky, though very large role in this organization, never served as the Chairman. She is just positioning herself as a co-founder of The Theosophical Society, and she wrote some books that became the “Scripture” for her members all over the world.<sup>44</sup> Blavatsky was *The Master* for her members that bringing the light of universal brotherhood and abolish the boundary bulkhead of the religion. She died on May 8 in the United Kingdom. Blavatsky’s death day is called as *White Lotus Day*.<sup>45</sup> It has been commemorated every year by members of International Theosophical Society.

After Olcott was passed away, Annie Besant became the president of The International Theosophical Society of the year 1907-1933. Besant’s intelligence in conveying the doctrines of Theosophy was further made the organization is growing rapidly (especially in India) and spread to the worldwide, including to Indonesia.

In India, it inspired a movement of Neo-Hinduism which incorporates Hinduism and Western knowledge. The main target and

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<sup>43</sup> C.W. Leadbeater, “Kitab Theosofie” on magazine of *Pewartar Theosofie Boewat Tanah Hindia Nederland (PTHN)*, No. 2, 1915, p. 20

<sup>44</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 18

<sup>45</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 27-28

object in this country is the adherents of Hinduism who became the majority in India. Theosophy is also managed to give their influence towards the elites of the country. In the land of Hindu, Besant succeeded in influencing the nationalism, she even entered and joined The National Congress of India.<sup>46</sup> It is the way to give her influence to the nationalism movement of India.

In Indonesia, they did the similar thing, they also targeted Muslims as the majority in this country. Those who became their objects are the Muslims which are still closely linked to the mystical belief in relics of Hindu mysticism and practiced the occultism, and mostly the descendants of Javanese who has influence in the Government at the time.<sup>47</sup>

According to Iskandar P. Nugraha, there is no evidence that reveals the emergence of the early movement of Theosophy in Indonesia except a few notes that give a general image of public nature. One of the common hints that Theosophy Movement in the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia) was first established in the town of Pekalongan, Central Java, about 8 years after its founding in the United States. And as a part of a movement, so the Theosophical Society in Indonesia became the branch of International Theosophical Movement that centered in Adyar, India. The lodge of theosophy in this small town is led by a European nobleman named Baron van Tengenel. The existence of Theosophy in Indonesia at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, it at least has managed to draw attention to some of the Javanese community.<sup>48</sup> And based on the decision of the President of the Theosophical Society,

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<sup>46</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 11-12

<sup>47</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 20

<sup>48</sup> Iskandar P. Nugraha, *Teosofi, Nasionalisme & Elite Modern Indonesia*, p. 8-9



Dr. Annie Besant, dated on April 15, 1912, the Nederlandsch Indische Theosofische Vereeniging (NITV) was legally recognized as a branch of the 20<sup>th</sup> by its President D. van Hinloopen Labberton.<sup>49</sup> This proves how theosophy developed to the East.

The Indonesian national movement prominents, such as Ki Hadjar Dewantara, Raden Ajeng Kartini, Raden Saleh, Armin Pane and Sanoesi Pane, Dr. Radjiman Wedyodiningrat (Chairman of the Council Committee for preparatory work of the independence of Indonesia), dr. Soetomo, dr Tjipto Mangoenkoesoemo, dr Wahidin Soedirohoesodo (Bachelor of medicine and an activist of Boedi Utoemo), were the influential members of Theosophy.<sup>50</sup> It can be seen that most of them are Elite Javanese.

The first President of Indonesia, Ir. Soekarno, even claimed that his father was a pure theosophist, a Muslim who hold on the teachings of Javanese-theosophy. While he himself ever intensively explore the Western literatures of Theosophical library in Surabaya. Soekarno stated, "I spent a long time for this mysticism world. There I met the great peoples. What's on their mind then being on my own mind, as well as their goals being my base conviction". While Mohammad Hatta, by his own admission, got a scholarship to study into the Netherlands by the help of a theosophist leader named Ir. P. Fournier and van Leeuwen.<sup>51</sup> Then it is clearly visible how Theosophy managed to affect the thought of Indonesian elites. And it is not an exaggeration to say that Theosophy has a big contribution and motion to the Indonesian nationalism.

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<sup>49</sup> Iskandar P. Nugraha, *Teosofi, Nasionalisme & Elite Modern Indonesia*, p. 10

<sup>50</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Teosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 3-4

<sup>51</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Teosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 4

Theosophy successfully in bringing this country, to this day, far from the ideals of Islam. Even though it appears by different face, but this thought of theosophist is rapidly developed. It spread into various international institutions and foundations. Which at the moment unfold in many organizations that bring the idea of pluralism, secularism, and humanism, attacking the teachings of Islam, such as Network Islam Liberal (JIL), LibForAll Foundation, Freedom Institute, Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP), The Wahid Institute,<sup>52</sup> and so on.

In sufficient detail, Herman Tollenaere explained that the theosophical membership in Indonesia peaked in 1930, i.e. 2090 peoples, consisting of: (1) 1006 European which more than 50% are Dutch, (2) 876 indigenous of Indonesian, (3) 208 Asian, and (4) 190 Chinese and Indian.<sup>53</sup> While at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, The Theosophical Society has had 500 branches in 40 countries in the East and Asia, including it's branch in France, that followed by Gerard Encausse in 1887.<sup>54</sup> Surely it shows not a few number of members.

Since its foundation up to now, the people who once led the International Theosophy, those are: Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1875-1907), Dr. Annie Besant (1907-1933), Dr. George Sydney Arundale (1933-1945), Mr. C. Jinaradajasa (1946-1953), Mr. Nilakantha Sri Ram (1953-1973), Mr. John B.S Coats (1973-1979), and Mrs. Radha Burnier (1980-now).<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 11

<sup>53</sup> Herman de Tollenaere, "Indian Thought in the Dutch Indies, The Theosophical Society", *IIAS Newsletter Online*, No. 23 (2000), p. 1

<sup>54</sup> Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement*, p. 43.

<sup>55</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofidi Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 20.

### 2.1.3 The Aims of The Theosophical Society

There are three aims of the International Theosophy, as follow: *First*, to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity without any distinction of the race (nation), creeds, social position, and color of skin. *Second*, invite to study of comparative religions, philosophy and science. *Third*, to oppose materialism and theological dogmatism in every possible way, by demonstrating the existence of occult forces unknown to science, in nature, and the presence of physic and spiritual powers in man.<sup>56</sup> These aims were mentioned in the most of theosophical literature.

The purpose of it first asserts that it generally aims to reconcile all religions, sects, and nations by upholding the universal values of humanity to create the human brotherhood, and indicates that all religions come from the same source.<sup>57</sup> As for the second objective of all three goals, Helena P. Blavatsky called it, “to promote the study of the beliefs of the Aryans and the other scriptures of the world’s religions and sciences, and to vindicate the importance of old Asiatic literature, such as that of the Brahmanical, Buddhist, dan Zoroastrian philosophies.”<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, for the third object Blavatsky said it “to investigate the hidden mysteries of nature under every aspect possible, and the psychic and spiritual powers latent in man.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> See the preface of Adian Husaini for *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 2010), p. xii. These three object are mentioned in many publication and literature of class 3. Lihat juga Sylvia Cranston, *The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky*, (California: Path Publishing House, 1993), p. 46-47

<sup>57</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 51

<sup>58</sup> Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 28. See also the preface of Edwin P. Wieringa on Media Zainul Bahri, *Wajah Studi Agama-Agama: dari Era Teosofi Indonesia (1901-1940) Hingga Masa Reformasi*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2015), p. 3

In other remarks, Blavatsky mentioned that the purpose of The Theosophical Society, namely, to reconcile all religions, sects, and nations under a common system of ethics, based on eternal verities.<sup>59</sup>Theosophy is also aims to find the noble science, which religion and science can be bridged.<sup>60</sup>Henry Steel Olcott stated:

“Essentially, a Theosophical Society is one which favours man’s original acquisition of knowledge about the hidden things of the universe, by the education and perfecting of his own latent powers. Theosophy differs as widely from philosophy as it does from theology. It professes to exclude all dialectical process, and to derive its whole knowledge of God from direct intuition and contemplation. This Theosophy dates from the highest antiquity of which any records are preserved, and every original founder of a religion was a seeker after divine wisdom by the theosophic process of self-illumination.”<sup>61</sup>

## 2.2 Religious Pluralism

### 2.2.1 Understanding Religious Pluralism

Religious pluralism, is etymologically derived from the two words, that is “pluralism” and “religion”. It is translated in Arabic “*al-ta’addudiyah al-diniyyah*” and in English “religious pluralism”. Then to define it accurately its should refer to the dictionary of that language.<sup>62</sup> Pluralism means the existence in one society of a number of groups that have different political or religious beliefs or that belong

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<sup>59</sup> Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 3

<sup>60</sup> Hammis Syafaq, “Nalar Teosofis sebagai Basis Epistemologis Kajian Agama dan Pengetahuan” on journal *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam*, Vol. 3 No. 1, Juni 2013, p.26

<sup>61</sup> Henry Steel Olcott, “On Theosophy”, *Sunrise* magazine, February-March 1997, p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Tinjauan Kritis*, p. 11

to different ethnic backgrounds.<sup>63</sup> Here is religious pluralism in general meaning.

Religious Pluralism is a special term in the study of religions. According to Adian Husaini, as a ‘special terminology’, the term is cannot meant arbitrarily, for example it’s equated with the meaning of the term ‘tolerance’, ‘mutual respect’ and so on. As one of the understanding (ism) which discuss about the viewpoint against the exist religions,<sup>64</sup> the term of ‘religious pluralism’ has been a long discussion among the scientists in the study of religions (*religious studies*).

Religious pluralism is based on an assumption that all religions are the same ways towards the same God. Thus, regard to this doctrine, all religions are different ways leading to the same God. Or, they said, that religion is a human relative perception to the absolute God, so that –due to its relativity- any religion may not claim or believe that its religion is truer or better than other religions<sup>65</sup> or claiming that only its religion itself is correct.

A prominent idol of religious pluralism in Christian circle, John Hick, suggested his definition regarding to religious pluralism as follow:

“Philosophically, however, the term refers to a particular theory of the relation between these traditions, with their different and competing claims. This is the theory that the great world religions constitute variant conceptions and perceptions of, and responses to, the one ultimate, mysterious divine reality...

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<sup>63</sup> A.S Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 643

<sup>64</sup> Adian Husaini, *Pluralisme Agama: Parasit bagi Agama-Agama (Pandangan Katolik, Protestan, Hindu dan Islam)*, p. 1

<sup>65</sup> Adian Husaini, *Pluralisme Agama: Parasit bagi Agama-Agama (Pandangan Katolik, Protestan, Hindu dan Islam)*, p. 2

Explicit pluralism accepts the more radical position implied by inclusivism: the view that the great world faiths embody different perceptions and conceptions of, and correspondingly different responses to, the Real or the Ultimate, and that within each of them independently the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to reality-centeredness is taking place. Thus the great religious traditions are to be regarded as alternative soteriological “spaces” within which – or “ways” along which – men and women can find salvation, liberation, and fulfillment.”<sup>66</sup>

John Hick is one of the major prominent of religious pluralism who proposed the idea of pluralism as a development of inclusivism. That, religion is a different ways toward the same goal (*The Ultimate*). He quoted Rumi who stated, “*The lamps are different but the light is the same; it comes from beyond.*”. According to Hick, “The Real” which is “the final object of religious concern”, is a universal concept. In the West, sometimes it is used the term “*ultimate reality*”; in the Sanskrit “*sat*”; in Islam “*al-haq*”.<sup>67</sup> The Motto of pluralists is: “*Deep down, all religions are the same – different paths leading to the same goal.*”<sup>68</sup> *In other word, this confirms that all religions are the same. According to them, then Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and other religions are same, all strives to the same God.*

*MUI (Indonesian Muslim Scholars Assembly), through its instruction on July 29, 2005 has stated that the doctrine of religious*

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<sup>66</sup> John Hick, on Mircea Eliade (ed), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1987), Vol. 12, p. 331

<sup>67</sup> Mircea Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 12, p. 332, see also Adian Husaini, *Wajah Peradaban Barat: Dari Hegemoni Kristen ke Dominasi Sekular-Liberal*, (Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 2005), p. 335

<sup>68</sup> Stevri I. Lumintang, *Theologia Abu-Abu: Tantangan dan Ancaman Racun Pluralisme dalam Teologi Kristen Masa Kini*, (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2004), p.67

*pluralism is contrary to Islam and it's forbidden for Muslims to follow this doctrine. MUI defines the religious pluralism as a doctrine teaches that all religions are the same, so thus the religions truth is relative; therefore, any religions should not claim that only his religion is right while other religions are wrong. It also taught that all religions have a mutual life in heaven.*<sup>69</sup>

*The decision (fatwa) of MUI is based on verses of the Holy Al-Qur'an, among them:*

*“Anyone who seek a religion other than Islam, then surely it is not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers.”;<sup>70</sup> “Surely, the (true) religion with Allah is Islam.”;<sup>71</sup> You shall have your religion and I shall have my religion.”<sup>72</sup>*

In addition, MUI also based their decision (fatwa) on some hadith, such the hadith that narrated by Imam Muslim in the book *Sahih Muslim*,<sup>73</sup> *The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said:*

*“For the sake of essence overwhelms the soul of Muhammad, there is no one of both Jewish or Christians who heard about me from this ummah (Muslim), then he died and has no faith against my teaching, unless he was going to be the occupants of the hell.” (Muslim).*

This decision (fatwa) also mentioned that the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) sent the letters of da'wah to the non-Muslims, those are the Emperor Heraclius, the Christian King of the Roman, Al-Najasyi the King of Abesenia who is Christian and Majus Emperor

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<sup>69</sup> See Adnin Armas (ed), *Pluralisme Agama: Telaah Kritis Cendekiawan Muslim*, (Jakarta: INSISTS, 2013), p. xii, and Adian Husaini, *Pluralisme Agama: Parasit bagi Agama-Agama (Pandangan Katolik, Protestan, Hindu dan Islam)*, p. 46-47

<sup>70</sup> Q.S. Ali Imran [3]: 85

<sup>71</sup> Q.S. Ali Imran [3]: 19

<sup>72</sup> Q.S. Al-Kafirun [109]: 6

<sup>73</sup> Adnin Armas (ed), *Pluralisme Agama: Telaah Kritis Cendekiawan Muslim*, p. xiii

of Persia, where the Prophet invited them to embrace Islam.<sup>74</sup> It clarify that Islam is the only true religion.

From the explanation above, we clearly see that the doctrine of religious pluralism damage the base Islamic concept. In this idea, there is no concept of a believer, heaven, hell, and so on. Therefore, it is impossible for this understand to live peacefully with the Islamic tawheed. The religious pluralism even so incompatible with the basic principle of Islam, as well as to other religions.

### **2.2.2 Historical Development of Religious Pluralism**

The presence of the doctrine of religious pluralism is begin since about the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Western society. This idea is rapidly growing in the Christian community and caused of three points: (1) historical trauma, certainly which related to the dominance of religion (Christianity) in the middle ages, (2) a Bible text problems, and (3) Christian theological problems. When the Church ruled in the middle ages, the idols has been doing a lot of mistakes and violences that eventually cause Western trauma towards particular religion's truth claim. This problem was later adopted by most of Muslim who has view on following Western civilization, so that Muslim can develop more.<sup>75</sup> Including on the views towards the other religions, most of them was later copying the inclusivist and Christian pluralist's view.

Inclusivism appears in religious thought in the West as the reaction to the exclusivism. Due to the failure of the exclusivism in providing the proof and reason over its staunchly that then inclusivism and subsequent the existence of pluralism can not be

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<sup>74</sup> Adian Husaini, *Pluralisme Agama: Parasit bagi Agama-Agama (Pandangan Katolik, Protestan, Hindu dan Islam)*, p. 52

<sup>75</sup> For further explanation of Western development and religious pluralism, see Adian Husaini, *Wajah Peradaban Barat: Dari Hegemoni Kristen ke Dominasi Sekular-Liberal*, (Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 2005), p. 13-28



circumvented.<sup>76</sup> While John Hick argued that the problem of religious pluralism arises due to a basic religious belief. He said:

“...a basic religious beliefs normally takes the form of religious claims that the certain religion is a valid response to the Divine, a response that embodies the true belief of the basic character of the Reality. And the problem of religious pluralism arising from the fact that there are many such claims.”<sup>77</sup>

Budhy Munawar Rahman, in his book: *Islam Pluralis* explained that the more this idea grow and spread, then evolved the idea of *teologia religionum*, which stressed that nowadays is too important to be in theology in the context of religions. This theology aims to tap into the interfaith dialogue, and thus trying to understand the new deep understanding way about how God has a way of rescue.<sup>78</sup>

Furthermore, the idea of religious pluralism managed to infiltrate and penetrate into the discourse of Islamic thought. In Indonesia, the spread of this doctrine has been very widespread, either in the level of public discourse and in the books or literatures of college.

For example, the renewal of Islam in Indonesia, Prof. Dr. Nurcholish Madjid, stating that there are three attitudes of interfaith dialogue that can be taken. *First*, exclusive in looking at other religions. (other religions is the wrong path, which is misleading for his followers). *Second*, inclusive (other religions is an implicit form of our religion). *Third*, pluralist – that can be expressed in the various formula, for example: “other religions are the equally valid ways to

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<sup>76</sup> Khalif Muammar, *Islam dan Pluralisme Agama: Memperkukuh Tawhid di Zaman Kekeliruan*, (Kuala Lumpur: CASIS, 2013), p. 3

<sup>77</sup> John Hick, *Tuhan Punya Banyak Nama*, translated by Amin Ma'ruf and Taufik Aminuddin from *God Has Many Names*, (Yogyakarta: Interfidei, 2006), p. 106

<sup>78</sup> Budhy Munawar Rahman, *Islam Pluralis: Wacana Kesetaraan Kaum Beriman*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 2004), p. 40

reach the same truth”, “other religions speak differently, but it is the same and valid truths”, or “every religion expresses an important part of the truth”. Nurcholis write again, “as a religious view, Islam is essentially inclusive and stretch its interpretation towards pluralist. For instance, the perennial philosophy which later has talked more in the interfaith dialogue in Indonesia stretch the pluralist’s view by saying that every religion is actually an expression and perceptions of the same God. Like a wheel, that the center of the wheel is a God, and the trellis the ways from the different religions. The perennial philosophy also divided the religion into esoteric and exsoteric level. One religion is different to other religions in the exsoteric level, but relatively equal in its esoteric level.<sup>79</sup> Thus, there is the term ‘*One God Many Roads/ Ways.*’

Another support for the development of this idea comes from the Chairman of *Indonesia Conference on Religion and Peace* (ICRP), Djohan Effendi, he argued, “I would like to add, that civil society is place of pluralism cradle. Rejecting pluralism, including religious pluralism, is same with rejecting civil society itself. Therefore, democracy, pluralism, and civil society are the triumvirate that should be the agenda of us (Muslims) in facing of the future”.<sup>80</sup> It proves that the idea of religious pluralism has succeeded to penetrate the thought of some Muslims scholars.

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<sup>79</sup> See the preface of Nurcholish Madjid on his book *Tiga Agama Satu Tuhan*, (Bandung: Mizan, 1999), p. xix, and see Adian Husaini, *Pluralisme Agama: Parasit Bagi Agama-agama*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (Jakarta: Media Dakwah, 2007), p. 10-11

<sup>80</sup> See the preface of Djohan Effendi for *Islam Pluralis: Wacana Kesetaraan Kaum Beriman*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 20014), p. xiv

### 2.2.3 The Theory of Religious Pluralism According to Anis

#### Malik Thoha

Dr. Anis Malik Thoha has identified the idea of religious pluralism based on the trend of thought and its main character, into four trends: (i) secular humanism; (ii) global theology; (iii) syncretism, or eclecticism; and (iv) sophia perennis or perennial philosophy. The fourth trends is if examined carefully, were ultimately ended in the same goal. That is providing an equal legitimacy to all religions and ideologies, in order to coexist together in a peaceful, safety, and full of tolerance and mutual respect. And with the absence of a superiority of one religion to another.<sup>81</sup> At least, this is the desirable values embodied by this trends, and this is what is now known as the doctrine of religious pluralism.

#### a. Secular Humanism

The trend of secular humanism is built on two main concept to create the peaceful coexistence between religions: (i) the centrality of the human being as subject and object; and (ii) secularization/secularism. Representative of this trend most found in some political figures such as Benjamin Franklin, and also the theologian such as Harvey Cox.<sup>82</sup>

Generally, the concept of secular humanism characterized by “antropocentris”, which is considered human beings as the center of cosmos, or place it in the central point. In fact, the thought of the centrality of man as a reference value in all things is old enough that its root can be traced in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, that was at the thought of Protagoras (490-420 BC), a leader of

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<sup>81</sup> Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Tinjauan Kritis*, p. 3

<sup>82</sup> Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Tinjauan Kritis*, p. 7

Sophist. From the philosophers here's found a statement that "man is the only measurement of everything."<sup>83</sup>

Secular humanism is an ethical system that reinforces and sublimity of humanist values, such as tolerance, compassion, honor, without any dependence on the creeds and religious teachings.<sup>84</sup> Thus, the main goal of humanism is serving on humanity.

In other explanation, the secular humanism is the idea of Freemasons which later became the global idea through the concept of human rights. No wonder, then, if the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that was assigned at the year 1948 mostly composed of the value of humanism and not based on a particular religion.<sup>85</sup> Therefore, the verses are clearly incompatible with the concept of Islam.

Based on the principle of Islam, in his life one must refer to the religious teachings, religion even become life guidelines that escorting each action. Human being is just a creation of God that has its limitations. Man cannot be placed as the measurement of everything, moreover to put human as the same as God. Then, the doctrine of secular humanism is absolutely contrary to the Islamic teachings.

### **b. Global Theology**

The trend of Global Theology refers to (i) the theory of religious conceptions carried by Wilfred Cantwell Smith; and (ii) the hypothesis of human existence from self-centeredness to reality-

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<sup>83</sup> Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Tinjauan Kritis*, p. 51

<sup>84</sup> Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Tinjauan Kritis*, p. 53

<sup>85</sup> See the preface of Adian Husaini on Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. xiv

centeredness (The Real) which propagated by John Hick.<sup>86</sup> He was one of the prominent who have a great influence on the appearance of the theory and concept of Global Theology. He had drained the entire effort and his mind to expand, explain and interpret the idea of religious pluralism.<sup>87</sup> He also had an important role in introducing it to the general public, till his name had been popular in the discourse of religious pluralism.

According to John Hick, a religion is a response of human being to the reality and the transcendent of God. From this definition, John Hick built the idea of religious pluralism. Further he said :

“...pluralism is the view that the great world faiths embody different perceptions and conceptions of, and correspondingly different responses to, the Real or the Ultimate from within the major variant cultural ways of human being; and that within each of them the transformation of human existence from self-centredness to Reality centredness is manifestly taking place, so far as human observation can tell, to much the same extent.”<sup>88</sup>

The idea of the transformation from religio-centredness to God-centredness which introduced by John Hick is simply the result of the his interpretation through the Copernican Revolution, who discovered the “centrality of the Sun” in our galaxy that instead of the Earth. Copernicus realized that the center of the solar system is the sun and not the earth. All heavenly bodies, including Earth, spin surrounding it. It is the sun, the source of origin of light and

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<sup>86</sup> Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Tinjauan Kritis*, p. 7

<sup>87</sup> Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Tinjauan Kritis*, p. 78

<sup>88</sup> John Hick, *Tuhan Punya Banyak Nama*, translated by Amin Ma’ruf and Taufik Aminuddin from *God Has Many Names*, p. 42

life, that all religions reflected it in their different ways.<sup>89</sup> Then John Hick reflected it on religion. His opinion should realize that the nature of other beliefs is centered on God, not on Christianity or other religions.

This idea consists of interrelated subjects, it's the concept of religion and the concept of God. Then he developed the both concepts by using "Smithian revolution" combined with "Kantian revolution", then interpret the relation between both concepts, based on the model of Copernican revolution.<sup>90</sup>

The barriers of this idea is wishing for a new concept of religion in which all religions can share the truth and salvation. God for them is The One Universal God. The names of God may be different, every religion (in their assumption) could be in different mention, but although his mention is in different ways, and with different sound, the essence of that is mentioned is same.<sup>91</sup> This is not the same as the understanding of the God as taught by Islam.

### c. Syncretism

In the dictionary of philosophy, syncretism means as the unification or reunification of some contrarial ideologies into a unity of mind or into a harmonious social relationship.<sup>92</sup> According to Anis Malik Thoha, this syncretism trend was represented by the community of *Brahma Samaj* and *The Theosophical Society* which established in 1875 in New York, USA. This trend is also well versed in the thought of Ramakrishna his disciple, Swami

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<sup>89</sup> Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Tinjauan Kritis*, p. 79

<sup>90</sup> John Hick, "God Has Many Names", p. 79-81, on Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Tinjauan Kritis*, (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 2007), p. 82

<sup>91</sup> Adnin Armas (ed), *Pluralisme Agama: Telaah Kritis Cendekiawan Muslim*, p. vi-vii

<sup>92</sup> Lorens Bagus, *Kamus Filsafat*, (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2002), 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, p. 1012

Vivekananda. It also seems very strong in the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi. This trend has two main foundations, (i) the idea that truth is divided into various religions, and (ii) the idea that each of religions is complementary. As the example of the representative of this trend is what is born out of thought of Kabir and Nanak, who formulated a new religion called ‘Sikhism’, which derived from the composite of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam.<sup>93</sup>

In the book “*Pluralisme Agama: Parasit bagi Agama-Agama*” written by Adian Husaini, it’s quoted the statement of Sukidi –a propagandists of religious pluralism among liberal Muhammadiyah- about the thought of Mahatma Gandhi. Sukidi presented:

“Mahatma Gandhi declared that all religions –either Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrian or others- are true. And consequently, the truth is exist and found in all religions. Those religions, on his mind, are like the tree that has many branches, but comes from one root (The One). A root of the origin and the orientation of all religions.”<sup>94</sup>

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, two radical universalists Hindu prominent were Ramakrisna (1836-1886) and Vivekananda (1863-1902). In addition to being influenced by the roots of the traditions of Hindu, Ramakrisna also incorporates the idea and practice of non-Vedic religions, such as Islam and Christian Liberal.<sup>95</sup> Although it’s seems that he is Hindu, Ramakrisna also prays in the mosques and

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<sup>93</sup> Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Tinjauan Kritis*, p. 7

<sup>94</sup> Sukidi, on Adian Husaini, *Pluralisme Agama: Parasit bagi Agama-agama*, p. 28

<sup>95</sup> Ngakan Made Madrasuta (ed), *Semua Agama Tidak Sama*, (Media Hindu, 2006),

churches and believes that all religions are aims at the same highest purpose.

Huston Smith, in his book which entitled: *The World's Religions*, cited Ramakhrisna's phrase, a Hindus sacred who seek for his God through different religions (Christianity, Islam and Hinduism). Ramakrishna said: "*God has made different religions to suit different aspirations, times, and countries. All doctrines are only so many paths; but a path is by no means God Himself. Indeed, one can reach God if one follows any of paths with whole-hearted devotion.*"<sup>96</sup>

The idea of Ramakrishna was continued by his famous disciple, Swami Vivekananda. This character is known for his immense to promote Hinduism in international prominence. Vivekananda adopted the idea of some sort of Radical Universalism that is supporting the equality of religions, while at the same time claimed that all religions are indeed evolved from the idea of lower religiosity towards the highest mode, which he stated, occupied by Hinduism.<sup>97</sup> This trend of syncretism seems to be mostly practiced in Hinduism circle.

This understanding clearly unacceptable by Islam because Islam teaches that it is the only true religion. Islam still acknowledge and appreciate the existence of other religions, but does not admit the truth. Moreover, by combining various elements of different beliefs to be embraced and believed, this is clearly contrary to the principle of Islam, because the Islamic teachings have a fundamental differences with the teachings of other religions.

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<sup>96</sup> Huston Smith, *The World's Religions*, (New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 1991), p. 73

<sup>97</sup> Ngakan Made Madrasuta (ed), *Semua Agama Tidak Sama*, p. 23



#### d. Sophia Perennis/Perennial Philosophy

Actually this trend of its popularity within the ancient mysticism, is the ancient trend, but as shown in the new face completed with modern philosophy, then at the time of the rise of religious pluralism issue, it may be regarded as the modern and relevant trend. The most prominent idols as the poles of this idea are Rene Guenon, Frithjof Schuon and Seyyed Hossein Nasr. This idea at its core is based on the belief that distinguishes between the 'transcendent reality' which is only one and it's impossible to know, and the 'religious nature' that is manifestation to the diverse external from the fact of The One and the transcendent.<sup>98</sup>

Frithjof Schuon said that the idea of the transcendent unity of religions was operated from the assumption that though the dogma, law, moral, religious rituals are different, but in the far depths of each religion there are what he called 'a common ground'. The equality of this principle is called *Religio Perennis*.<sup>99</sup> Schuon argued that the religions are different in the exoteric aspect, but have the same esoteric substance.<sup>100</sup> From these assumptions, he concluded that all religions possess of truth and unite on a dimension of truth (the same God).

However, that is not a new concept. Previously, Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy and Rene Guenon has given a similar term with the same purpose. Coomaraswamy called it as *Philosophia Perennis*<sup>101</sup> while Guenon called it as *Primordial Tradition*. It seems that the idea of *Religio Perennis* of Schuon's just continuing the idea of Coomaraswamy and Guenon.

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<sup>98</sup> Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Tinjauan Kritis*, p. 7

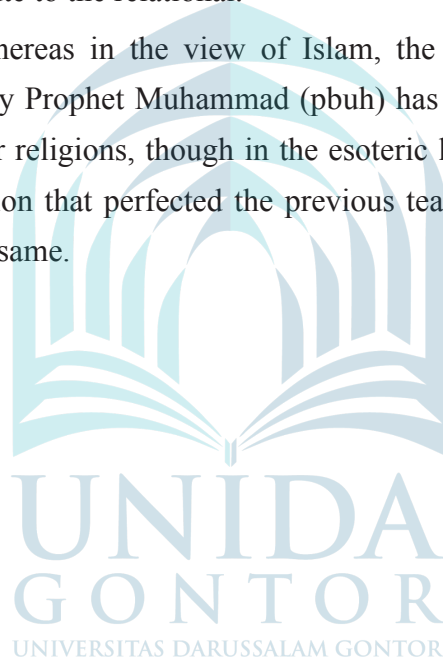
<sup>99</sup> Adnin Armas (ed), *Pluralisme Agama: Telaah Kritis Cendekiawan Muslim*, p. 3

<sup>100</sup> Komaruddin Hidayat and Muhammad Wahyudi Nafis, *Agama Masa Depan: Perspektif Filsafat Perennial*, (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2003), p. 110

<sup>101</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Need for a Sacred Science*, (United Kingdom: Curzon Press, 1993), p. 28

All religions, as assert by Nasr, is “the ways/paths to the same top.”<sup>102</sup> In fact, the proponents of perennial philosophy want to relive the sacred tradition and keep them in a fair manner, without any deem that one is more superior than others, and without trying to deny the sacredness of things, also without trying to incorporate the absolute to the relational.

Whereas in the view of Islam, the teachings taught and brought by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) has a different dimension with other religions, though in the esoteric level. Thus, Islam is a true religion that perfected the previous teachings, and it doesn't mean the same.



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<sup>102</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Need for a Sacred Science*, p. 293

### CHAPTER THREE

## THE SIMILARITY BETWEEN THE DOCTRINES OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM WITH THE TEACHING OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

The main object of the founders of the Theosophical Society that reconcile all religions, sects and nations under a system of general ethics, based on eternal truths. Blavatsky also claims that theosophy was as old as the world itself, in both of its teachings and ethics, because theosophy is the most universal system and widespread among all.<sup>103</sup>

The members of theosophy also has a mission to stand out above all the religions, they call themselves as seekers and lovers of truth. As reflected in the motto promoted by the International Theosophical Society, namely: “There Is No Religion Higher than Truth”.<sup>104</sup> The truth is became the main goal of the theosophists’ belief.

With the goal, the views, and such mission, theosophy seems intent into buster religions or into a group of ‘super-religion’ which is above or beyond the existing religions.<sup>105</sup> And it is very much in line with the notion of Religious Pluralism. For furthermore, the resemblance views and objectives between the teachings of the Theosophical Society with the doctrines of religious pluralism will seem evident from studying the teachings of which are summarized and are believed by the members of the Theosophical Society, which will be described and expressed as follows:

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<sup>103</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 3-4

<sup>104</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 6

<sup>105</sup> Adian Husaini, “Kebangkitan Kembali Theosofidi Indonesia”, published on [www.hidayatullah.com](http://www.hidayatullah.com), accessed on Monday, February 19, 2018.

### 3.1 Secular Humanism

One of the teachings of the Theosophical Society is the essence of Kabbalah. Kabbalah is the oldest belief and most respected by the Jews. Kabbalah is also said to be the mother of all magic in the world.<sup>106</sup> Kabbalah teachings concerning emanation (radiance of God) become the belief of occult groups and organizations, including theosophy.

Kabbalah doctrine influence and entrenched in the organization of theosophy and Freemasonry. Most activists of theosophy are members of Freemasonry who study Kabbalah, as well as Blavatsky who study this science in a Jewish rabbi in Jerusalem.<sup>107</sup> This doctrine also what it is called to bring the doctrine of humanism flows to Europe. In a particular source mentioned that the relationship between humanism and the Kabbalah has been confirmed in one book by Malachi Martin, a professor of history at the Vatican's Pontifical Institute Gospel, which reveals that the influence of the Kabbalah can be clearly observed among the humanists.<sup>108</sup>

Artawijaya, a researcher of theosophical movement in Indonesia, agreed to assess that theosophy is one of the bearers of secular humanism organizations. According to him, there is a fundamental similarity between theosophy, Freemasonry and the Kabbalah, which makes sorcery (occult) and mysticism as a handle in running the organization, and make the superiority of humanity as the goal, as well as secular humanism understood that very attached near the two organizations.<sup>109</sup> Secular humanism with a mystical bandage, this about that pictures of the two.

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<sup>106</sup> ZA MAulani, *Zionisme: Gerakan Menaklukkan Dunia*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (Jakarta: Pustaka Amanah, 2003), p. 51

<sup>107</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 74

<sup>108</sup> Malachi Martin, *The Keys of This Blood*, on Harun Yahya, *Ancaman Global Freemasonry: Terbongkarnya Sisi Gelap Pemikiran Masonik*, on <http://www.harunyahya.com>

<sup>109</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 78

He also considered that theosophy strive to separate religion from government affairs. For them, religion is inner affairs that no one has the right to organize, including the state. In this case, in the name of human rights, they reject state intervention in private affairs and morality. Countries are not entitled to regulate the moral affairs, such as the ban on elements of sensuality that is displayed in front of the public.<sup>110</sup>

In a source mentioned that theosophy impartially any one stream and is composed of members who are seeking the truth. They strive to promote brotherhood and serve humanity.<sup>111</sup> Therefore they adopted the motto “There is no religion higher than truth”.<sup>112</sup> This views and objectives of theosophy appears reflects the values of humanism. Harun Yahya, in his book entitled *Global Freemasonry* states that humanism constant reminder of the idea of love, peace and brotherhood. Even further humanism has a philosophical meaning in the form of a way of thinking that makes the concept of humanity as its focus and only goal.<sup>113</sup> Very similar and in line with what be the goals and objectives of the Theosophical Society.

Universal brotherhood in theosophy’s view is a rejection of religious absolutism. In other words, brotherhood must be based on the concept of religious pluralism, where there should not be any religion that felt right. Religious truth is relative, there should be no absolutizing.<sup>114</sup> Therefore, religion is exclusively in the so-called will cause sectarian attitudes and storing seeds of conflict.

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<sup>110</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 29

<sup>111</sup> Adian Husaini, “Kebangkitan Kembali Theosophy Indonesia”, on [www.hidayatullah.com](http://www.hidayatullah.com), accessed on Monday, February 19, 2018.

<sup>112</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 3

<sup>113</sup> Harun Yahya, *Ancaman Global Freemasonry: Terbongkarnya Sisi Gelap Pemikiran Masonik*, p. 37

<sup>114</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 52-53

Human brotherhood which is regardless of religion as an important mission of theosophy also illustrated by the Chairman of the Vereeniging Theosophysche Indies. D. Van Hinloopen Labberton on a magazine, *Theosophy*, in December 1912. He said:

“Human progress with or not with religion? I think if religion without reason, and if religion without the true knowledge, it is impossible to go forward. Never you mind profess any religion, because what is called religion means: love of neighbour, mild succor and polite. So what is called as true religion was not the case at birth, but the inner case.”<sup>115</sup>

Universal Brotherhood without regard to religious boundaries, in view of theosophy seems to be the most important and crucial thing in human life. Though Islam has asserted that true brotherhood must be built on a foundation of faith. Word of Allah in the Quran surah Al-Hujurat verse 10 reads:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَ أَخَوَيْكُمْ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

“The believers are but brethren, therefore the make peace between your brethren and be careful of (your duty to) Allah that mercy may be had on you.”<sup>116</sup>

### 3.2 Global Theology

If we look carefully to the thought of the Theosophical Society, the teachings of religious, philosophical and moral truth, is essentially and fundamentally no different from what is contained in the doctrine of religious pluralism. Annie Besant, the second president of the Theosophical Society, formulate the theosophical teachings in four reality or universal essence as

<sup>115</sup> D. Van Hinloopen Labberton, on *Theosophy* magazine, December 1912, p. 45

<sup>116</sup> Al-Hujurat [49]: 10

follows: (1) *The unity of God* (unity of God). The fundamental teachings of theosophy as all religions are universal religious truth. (2) *The Trinity of the manifested God* (Incarnation of God the Trinity). God manifested as *Logos*. (3) *The hierarchy of beings* (level form). (4) *Universal brotherhood*, which is different from the concept of ‘equivalence’ (*equality*) or ‘democracy’.<sup>117</sup>

Universal nature of the four was built on what Besant called “The Ancient Wisdom” which says that the world and everything in it (including humans and religions) was born from an emanation and evolving from the One Substance second to none. Therefore, the origin, the diversity or plurality and difference in the outward manifestation, forms and types, did not affect the unity of the original. Everything is equally shares authenticity and truth, because all religions come from one and the same origin, as man was created from the blood of one.<sup>118</sup>

According to Besant, theosophy or universal religion is built on two foundations, namely God immanent as well as transcendent and solidarity or brotherhood of all mankind. According to theosophists, if God was one then humanity is also one. Therefore, differences in race, skin color and religion does not mean a lack of unity of divinity.<sup>119</sup> If a person wants to know God well, then he must discard character, regardless of religion, race and skin color.

This is what be believed in theosophy about the unity of God and man. And with the concept of these units, the theosophy aspire only one religion for all people. It is quite similar to what is covered by Hick in which he called *Global Theology* in response to the reality of the diversity

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<sup>117</sup> Adnin Armas, *Pluralisme dan Gerakan Freemason*, on [www.hidayatullah.com](http://www.hidayatullah.com), accessed on Monday, February 19, 2018.

<sup>118</sup> Annie Besant, *Theosophical Society*, on Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Tinjauan Kritis*, p. 101

<sup>119</sup> Media Zainul Bahri, *Wajah Studi Agama-Agama: dari Era Teosofi Indonesia (1901-1940) Hingga Masa Reformasi*, p. 117

of religions and cultures in the world, as he expressed in another book: “we must be prepared to respond to the new situation by beginning the long-term global task of forming a human or theology. It should be noted that a global theology would be compatible with the continued existence of a plurality of religions as concrete forms of religious life.”<sup>120</sup>

This concept, actually the true parallel with the doctrine of One God with many names. In his book, John Hick says that what he meant by “God has many names” is that the One Eternal addressed by various human cultures both personal and non-personal, and from that different perception then comes the religious life which we call by the great world religions.<sup>121</sup> Because God or the Divine is eternal, while the names of his many is an understanding or a response from the adherents of various religious, then the theosophy that is focused on the mystical-esoteric (eternal) wants mankind to direct their sight and inner to the One God, one humanity and one place of worship. Zainul Bahri argues that it will realize the brotherhood of humanity and progress of mankind, and thus minimize conflicts and disputes.<sup>122</sup>

As propagated by John Hick, Besant stated that the Theosophical Society’s goal is to teach its followers that religions are an expression of divine wisdom which is born and come from one substance. Therefore, diversity and difference in the outward manifestation and form is not the essence of religious teachings. All religions have the authenticity and truth because it comes from a single substance.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 1993), p. 106

<sup>121</sup> John Hick, *Tuhan Punya Banyak Nama*, translated by Amin Ma’ruf and Taufik Aminuddin from *God Has Many Names*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, (Yogyakarta: Interfidei, 2006), p. 69

<sup>122</sup> Media Zainul Bahri, *Wajah Studi Agama-Agama: dari Era Teosofi Indonesia (1901-1940) Hingga Masa Reformasi*, p. 116

<sup>123</sup> Media Zainul Bahri, *Wajah Studi Agama-Agama: dari Era Teosofi Indonesia (1901-1940) Hingga Masa Reformasi*, p. 117, and Herry Nurdi, *Kebangkitan Freemason di Indonesia: Di Balik Kerusakan Agama-agama*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, (Jakarta: Cakrawala Publishing, 2006), p. 138



That such belief is contrary to the teaching of Islam. Islam believes there is only one true religion, and according to Islam there is only one God to be worshipped. God in Islam also should not be called arbitrarily, because His name had already been introduced by Lord itself through the Qur'an, i.e. Allah, not Jesus, not Yahweh, not Gautama, or other names that are not introduced by God. Therefore, Islam cannot accept the view that all religions are equally true and absolute. Islam respects the existence of other religions, and not forcing other people converted to Islam. However Islam only acknowledges the absolutism of one religion, namely Islam. Because, Allah has already clarified: *“Surely, the (true) religion with Allah is Islam.”*<sup>124</sup>

Prof. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, an expert on the philosophy of Islam, and the founder of International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), wrote on his book:

“There is only one genuine revealed religion, and its name is given as Islam, and the people who follow this religion are praised by God as the best among mankind...Islam, then, is not merely a verbal noun signifying ‘submission’; it is also the name of particular religion descriptive of true submission, as well as the definition of religion: submission to God.”<sup>125</sup>

### 3.3 Syncretism

The trend of syncretism in the discourse of religious pluralism brings the discourse that all religions share the truth between each other, or that the absolute truth is not the monopoly of one particular religion, but every religion has the relative and partial truth.<sup>126</sup> In line with the model of this kind of thinking, Blavatsky said that the main source of disputes trigger is

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<sup>124</sup> Ali-Imron [3]: 19.

<sup>125</sup> Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Prolegomena to The Metaphysics of Islam*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995), p. 37

<sup>126</sup> Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Tinjauan Kritis*, p. 93

caused by the difference of religions. Thus he said that the absolute truth does not belong to a particular religion, but these religions are absolutely complementary, she remarked:

“Because there is no more fertile source of hatred and Strife than religious differences. When one party or another thinks itself the sole possessor of absolute truth, it becomes only natural that it should think its neighbor absolutely in the clutches of error or the ‘devil’. But once get a man to see that none of them has the whole truth, but that they are mutually complementary, that the complete truth can be found only in the combined views of all, after that the which is false in each of them has been sifted out, then true brotherhood in religion will be established.”<sup>127</sup>

### 3.3.1 Mixed Some Different Elements of Faiths

In some literatures, it is mentioned clearly that basically theosophy is the teaching of religious syncretism and various ancient beliefs. In his book, Blavatsky also said, “we hold to no religion, and to no philosophy in particular, we cull the good we find in each”, and also she said, “the members of the Theosophical Society at large are free to profess whatever religion or philosophy they like, or none if they so prefer, provided they are in sympathy with, and ready to carry out one or more of the three objects of the Association.”<sup>128</sup>

From what has been said by Blavatsky above, it seems obvious that she rejected the absolute truth claims by a particular religion. Theosophy just trying to mix and reconcile the various elements of different (possibly even contrasted) selected from a variety of religions and traditions in a particular organization or in a new stream.

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<sup>127</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 32

<sup>128</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 14

Agree with it, a researcher of theosophy and its influence on the thought of elite national Indonesia, Alexander P. Nugraha, in his book says that basically the Theosophical Society is an organization which strongly criticized psychotherapy attempt to impose one's confidence. Practices of religious broadcasting at all opposed smelled coercion. They even suggest an attempt syncretism of all religious beliefs are considered good.<sup>129</sup>

In other sources, Herman de Tollenaere argued that since the beginning of theosophy is mixing up various kinds of religion, philosophy, ancient traditions and many other sources. The doctrines of theosophy taken from the teachings of Hermes, Pythagoras, Plato, Plotinus, and the teachings of another Greek philosophy and religious system of the Roman, Tarot and card game of medieval Italy, the model triangles and logy (lodge) on Freemasonry and Masons, believe in the world of light astral and the spirits of the teachings of spiritualism, takes the concept of angels and gods of the teachings of Dionysius in 500 BC, Arahah concept of Buddhism, the doctrine of a power struggle (God) white and black power Zoroastrian and Mani; take reincarnation of Hindus, karma and others. The concept of the essential unity of religions drawn from Hinduism, Sufism Islam and Baha'i. Because of this charming syncretism makes a lot of character and educated people from around the world interested in becoming a member of theosophy.<sup>130</sup>

Generally, the comprehensive doctrines of theosophy is a collection of perennial wisdom of religions: Hinduism, Buddhism,

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<sup>129</sup> See the footnote No. 6 on Iskandar P. Nugraha, *Teosofi, Nasionalisme & Elite Modern Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Komunitas Bambu, 2011), p. 37

<sup>130</sup> Herman AO de Tollenaere, *The Politics of Divine Wisdom: Theosophy and Labour, National, and Women's Movements in Indonesia and South Asia 1857-1947*, (Leiden: Universiteit Nijmegen, 1996), p. 25-27

Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, Pythagoras, Socrates, eclectic philosophy, and others.<sup>131</sup> As Blavatsky explained that the ethics (ethical system) roomates carry out in the Theosophical Society are ready and clear enough for whomsoever would follow them. They are the essence of the world's ethics, Gathered from the teachings of all the world's great Reformers. Therefore, it will find represented there in Confucius and Zoroaster, Laotze and the *Bhagavad Gita*, the precepts of Gautama Buddha and Jesus of Nazareth, of Hillel and his school, as Also of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and their schools.<sup>132</sup>

Olcott who became the first president of theosophy for about 32 years, also known as the love studying the legacies of every religion in the world. Because of that, he had studied Hinduism in India and Buddhists in Sri Lanka. He also studied Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Islam, with the aim to find the similarity from the common ground of the universal values of those religions.<sup>133</sup> By the Sri Lanka society, Olcott even attributed as being the reincarnation of Buddha.<sup>134</sup>

Another main teachings in theosophy is what is called Karma and reincarnation. In essence, the two teachings come from Hinduism and Buddhism. This doctrine believe that every human action be fruitful reward or sin (karma) and that's why everyone will enjoy the reward or bear the sins of the life to come (because it has not been completely received in the previous life). Adherents of theosophy, regardless of

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<sup>131</sup> Media Zainul Bahri, *Wajah Studi Agama-agama: Dari Era Teosofi Indonesia (1901-1940) Hingga Masa Reformasi*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2015), 1<sup>st</sup> edition, p. 102

<sup>132</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 34

<sup>133</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Teosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 29

<sup>134</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Teosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 30

their religion, are believed to these two things. This theme is also a topic that is often discussed in any publication of theosophy.<sup>135</sup>

Reincarnation in theosophy belief is the belief that man continues to manifest in new periods all the time. For the theosophists, the human body will be reincarnated, while the real man or human nature mysticism which according to them one with God, it will not die, but it'll be eternal and everlasting. Humans will be transformed with a new body, a new mind, a new life and memory, though in fact the incarnation of human life before.<sup>136</sup> The concept of reincarnation has a fundamental place in theosophy, besides their beliefs about evolution and karma.

In the belief of reincarnation, in the context of achieving the chastity, the theosophists attempt the four roads of Purity, and if it has arrived at the peak or the degree of Asoka then the question will be detached from the chain (cycle) of life, there will be born into the natural world in many forms (reincarnation). At the peak level, will be opened (for someone who reaches) seven roads and he could have chosen anywhere until he achieved Nirvana.<sup>137</sup>

William Quan Judge, was one of the founders of Theosophical Society with Helena Blavatsky and Henry S. Olcott. He clearly explained in his book about karma and reincarnation as the principal of theosophical teaching. He argued that all mankind was born into the world, the fact that he did not live his first life, but the planet where he lives now is the result of the activity and the evolution of those previously dead before. He said:

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<sup>135</sup> Media Zainul Bahri, *Wajah Studi Agama-agama: Dari Era Teosofi Indonesia (1901-1940) Hingga Masa Reformasi*, p. 140

<sup>136</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Teosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 69

<sup>137</sup> As quoted by Media Zainul Bahri from "Woedjoed-woedjoed Moelia", on magazine of *PTHN* (1915), p. 135-136

“... we are therefore not appearing for the first time when we come upon this planet, but have pursued a long, an immeasurable course of activity and intelligent perception on other systems of globes, some of which were destroyed ages before the solar system condensed. This immense reach of the evolutionary system means, then, that this planet on which we now are is the result of the activity and the evolution of some other one that died long ago.”<sup>138</sup>

A member of theosophy in Indonesia, Reksosiswoio, even mentioned in the article he wrote that the essence and purpose of the two doctrine is found in several religions. It refers to the letter of the Qur’an As-Sajda, Dhammapada I: 1 and 2 (Buddha), Devi Bhagavata 1; 5; 74 (Hindu), Korintas III: 8 (Christian), Genesis IX: 6 (Jewish), Ahunavad Gatha 30: 11 (Zoroaster), and Japji, Master I (Sikh).<sup>139</sup>

Whereas Islam clearly against what was believed by theosophists in the teaching of karma and reincarnation. In Islamic teachings, everyone just pass one life. The dead will not live again to the world except when raised in the day afterlife. Each person is responsible for what he has done during his time in the world. Sin or mistake of a person can not be assigned to or passed on to others. He will get a reward according to his acts, both which is good or bad. It was mentioned in a verse of the Holy Qur’an:

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<sup>138</sup> William Q. Judge, *The Ocean of Theosophy*, (California: Theosophical University Press, 2011), p. 2-3

<sup>139</sup> Reksosiswoio, “Pertanjaan” on Media Zainul Bahri, *Wajah Studi Agama-agama: Dari Era Teosofi Indonesia (1901-1940) Hingga Masa Reformasi*, p. 140

قُلْ أَغَيْرِ اللَّهِ أَبْغَى رَبًّا وَهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ۚ وَلَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ  
 إِلَّا عَلَيْهَا ۚ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ۚ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُم مَّرْجِعُكُمْ  
 فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٦٤﴾

*“Say: What shall I seek a Lord other than Allah? And He is the Lord of all things; and no soul earns (evil) but against itself, and no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another; then to your Lord is your return, so He will inform you of that in which you differed.”<sup>140</sup>*

### 3.3.2 The Meaning of Symbol of Theosophy

As same as Freemasonry, Theosophy also uses symbols as a language of communication to convey his teachings and recognize the identity of the organization. Symbols used by members of theosophy had some similarities with the symbol of Freemasonry and the Kabbalah. Such as triangles overlapping and interlocking to form a hexagram (six-pointed star), mythology, snakes, and other ancient symbol. Theosophy symbols refer to it as a spiritual expression of the profane (sacred) and philosophy’s concept of man and the universe.<sup>141</sup>

The symbols of theosophy and freemasonry taken from the trust and Chinese mythology, Greek, Egyptian, Roman and artificial religions such as Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, and trust the pagans, and the servants of the devil.<sup>142</sup> Symbol of proficiency level, are very noticeable how theosophy brings together a wide variety of beliefs in religions.

<sup>140</sup> Al-An’am [6]: 164

<sup>141</sup> Henry Steel Olcott, *Theosophical Symbolism*, on <http://blavatsky.net/theosophy.htm>, accessed on Friday, March 23, 2018.

<sup>142</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 36-37



**Image 1.** Theosophy's symbol  
UNIVERSITAS DARUSSALAM GONTOR

**a. Coiled Snake**

Snake in the theosophical belief is a symbol of wisdom and immortality. Coiled snake, with its tail into the mouth is a symbol of life that no beginning and no end. Each time the snake sheds its skin, his body looked young again. It describes the life cycle and the symbol of reincarnation in humans.<sup>143</sup>

This symbol, as well as by theosophy believed, there is in the symbol of Hermes, the God of the ancient Greeks believed to

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<sup>143</sup> Media Zainul Bahri, *Wajah Studi Agama-agama: Dari Era Teosofi Indonesia (1901-1940) Hingga Masa Reformasi*, p. 72



be the connection between God and man. In a broader belief of the group of theosophy, the snake believed to be a symbol of secret knowledge that is a symbol of the highest spiritual wisdom.<sup>144</sup>

### **b. Swastika**

In the belief of theosophy, Swastika interpreted as a symbol of evolution (progress) and love (love of fellow beings). In theosophy's symbol, the swastika that lies between the mouth and the tail of a snake means that evolution and love is eternal.<sup>145</sup> Swastika is defined as the wheels of evolution, the velocity of the universe and eternity of natural law.

In about 1930, in Indonesia rises *Magazine De Swastika*, a magazine that talks about the occult, mysticism and ancient teachings. Dutch-language magazine which is located in Karangtempel 10, Semarang, Central Java is a matter of reading for the Freemasons and Theosophists in Indonesia.<sup>146</sup>

### **c. Post Aum Symbol in Sanskrit**

Symbol is located at the very top of theosophy's symbol. In Sanskrit this symbol reads "Aum" which is a sacred symbol for Hindus. This word implies the creation of the Word or Logos, a reality that can not be mentioned and the source of all life. This

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<sup>144</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 37. See also the magazine of PTTI (Perhimpunan Theosophy Tjabang Indonesia), 1954, News of PB Perwathin (Pengurus Besar Persatuan Warga Theosophy Indonesia), No. 5, May 8, 1973, p. 211, *Magazine of Pewarta Theosophy Boewat Tanah Hindia Nederland (PTHN)*, September 1906, p.17-18, <http://www.blavatsky.net/theosophy/judge/articles/theosophical-symbolism.htm>.

<sup>145</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 39, as quoted from news of PB Perwathin, p. 212

<sup>146</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 40

word also connotes power, which should be pronounced with an attitude and a great respect.<sup>147</sup>

In another statement, noted that the word “Aum” is equivalent to “Om” which means the Amen in ancient Egypt, Aion in Ancient Greek language and Aivum in Latin. This symbol is deliberately placed at the far end on theosophy symbol to indicate the purity and the source of power.<sup>148</sup>

#### **d. Symbol of Two Triangle Black-White Mutually Lock**

This symbol is so similar to the symbol of Judaism. In Judaism, the interlocking triangle facing upwards and downwards referred to as a hexagram (six-pointed star), or commonly known as The Star of David used under the prophetic Solomon (pbuh). In the Jewish doctrine, the triangle facing upwards is the symbol of materialism, while the downward facing triangle symbol of spiritualism.

This symbol is also used by the Kabbalists. In Kabbalah beliefs, downward-facing triangle referred to as a symbol of the Deity, while the upward facing triangles referred to as a symbol of the Perfect Man. It is a symbol of unity to show how man can become God, as supreme doctrine of humanism.<sup>149</sup>

The doctrine of theosophy interpreted white triangle symbol (lifted up) and black (towering downward) interlocked as a symbol of spiritual descent into substance. This emblem was also

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<sup>147</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 40, as quoted from news of PB Perwathin, p. 213

<sup>148</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi* p. 41

<sup>149</sup> ZA Maulani, *Zionisme: Gerakan Menaklukkan Dunia*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (Jakarta: Pustaka Amanah, 2003), p. 57

interpreted as a continuous clashes between darkness and light of human nature.<sup>150</sup>

In another statement, the black triangle to the bottom of it is a symbol of the consequences of Animals (lower peak), as a result of Rajas (left end) and due to Tamas (right end). All kinds of craving and vile or degrading is a result of wildlife (low vibration physical body). All sorts of trouble and desires that make misery is a result of the Rajas (low vibration astral body). All kinds of rudeness, ignorance and mind dark is the result of Tamas (low vibration body mentally).

The black triangle down it must be defeated by mastering a white triangle looming up, called the Atma (peak above), Budhi (left end) and Manas (the far right). When a man starts to become disciples (students) then he must continue to learn to fight lust due Animals turned into Atma (willingness true), to change the result of Rajas into Budhi (love pure towards each other), and the change due to Tamas into Manas (aktif and wise ). Atma, Budhi and Manas is also called as Triguna, three positive force in nature.<sup>151</sup>

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#### **e. The Cross of Ancient Egypt in Triangle**

On the symbol of theosophy, in black and white triangles interlocking are the symbol of the cross. Ancient Egyptian cross that sphere-shaped end is called Crux Ansata. In Ancient Egyptian beliefs, Crux Ansata is an occult symbol that of the God Horus (human-headed bird). This symbol depicts the life of return or resurrection. The cross shape of the letter “T” with a circle

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<sup>150</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 42, as quoted from news of PB Perwathin, p. 212

<sup>151</sup> Media Zainul Bahri, *Wajah Studi Agama-agama: Dari Era Teosofi Indonesia (1901-1940) Hingga Masa Reformasi*, p. 73-74

surrounding it is also called the Tau symbolizing the substance or the world of form. While dots on it symbolizes the spirit or life. This cross is also referred to as the cross of life, the symbol of resurrection and immortality.<sup>152</sup>

If we examined further, under the symbol of theosophy listed the motto of this organization which reads, “*There Is No Religion Higher Than Truth*”. This truth in the view of theosophy can be achieved by any religion, as long as these religions lead to what is called by theosophy as “unity of life” that live in togetherness and fraternity.<sup>153</sup>

The doctrine contained in the motto of theosophy is similar to what is the basis and foundation for the bearer group of religious pluralism. That each religion can not claim that it is religion absolutely true (absolute truth claims) while others were considered false religion. Because in their view there is no single absolute truth belong to a particular religion, but any religion ever, as long as run the goodness and truth, it is essentially the same.

### 3.4 Sophia Perenis / Perennial Philosophy

Theosophy teaches about understanding of the esoteric (inner) and exoteric (born). All religions are believed to have similarities in the inner level, and differ only in practice or behavior. Blavatsky said, “the fact is that every ancient religious, or rather philosophical, cult consisted of an esoteric or secret teaching, and an exoteric or outward public worship”<sup>154</sup> and “like all other ancient systems, Theosophy is divided into exoteric and esoteric sections”.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 42

<sup>153</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 43

<sup>154</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 6

<sup>155</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 14

The core teachings in line with Theosophy have recently emerged and taken by some prominents of Western philosophy which is also the bearers of the idea of religious pluralism, as Frithjof Schuon, who suggested on religion eternal (*religio perennis*), Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy with the idea of Perennial Philosophy, and Rene Guenon with Primordial Tradition idea.<sup>156</sup>

Schuon also stated that every religion has the dimension of birth (exoteric) and the inner dimension (esoteric). Exoteric is external aspects, formal, legal, dogmatic, ritual, ethics, and moral religion. Exoteric entirely within the created cosmos. While the metaphysical and esoteric aspect is the internal dimension of religion. Without esotericism, religion would be merely the outer aspect and formalistic dogmatism. According to Schuon, the meeting point of religions at the level of esoteric.<sup>157</sup>

It is not excessive if Adnin Armas later argued that in its development, *The Theosophical Society* contributed to the realization of eternal wisdom (*Sophia Perennis*). Because the thought of *Sophia Perennis* leaders such as Rene Guenon and Frithjof Schuon was not in spite of the teachings in the theosophy and *Freemasons*.<sup>158</sup>

These linkages can be seen from the background of Schuon thought that was influenced by the ideas of its predecessor, Rene Guenon. If we examine further, Guenon thinking about *the Primordial Tradition* can not be separated from his spiritual experience in *Freemasonry*. The thinking are colored by the thought of Gerard Encausse, the mystics, the founder of *the Theosophical Society* in France at the same time a prominent figure *Freemasons*. In schools established by Encausse, Guenon learn the study

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<sup>156</sup> Artawijaya, *Gerakan Theosofi di Indonesia: Menelusuri Jejak Aliran Kebatinan Yahudi Sejak Masa Hindia Belanda Hingga Era Reformasi*, p. 48

<sup>157</sup> Adnin Armas, *Pluralisme Agama dan Gerakan Freemason*, on [www.hidayatulloh.com](http://www.hidayatulloh.com), accessed on Friday, February 23, 2018.

<sup>158</sup> Adnin Armas, "Freemason dan Gagasan Pluralisme Agama", an article presented in Masjid Babut Taubah, Kemang Pratama, Bekasi, on May 12, 2007.

of mystical (*occult studies*) and get acquainted with a number of prominent Freemason, theosophy, and various other spiritual movements.<sup>159</sup> From here we can see how the idea of a theosophist so influence the thinking of the bearers of the eternal wisdom teachings / Sophia perennis. So what is now referred to as the eternal wisdom (perennial wisdom) is actually already contained in the teachings and beliefs of the members of The Theosophical Society.

Coomaraswamy and Guenon idea to revive the eternal truths that exist in religious tradition and further developed by Frithjof Schuon. The thought of Schuon much influenced in particular by Guenon. Schuon began to send letters and correspondence with Guenon for about 20 years. Both were only meet in Cairo, Egypt in 1938.<sup>160</sup> Confidence and similar beliefs embraced by Coomaraswamy, Guenon and Schuon actually been there and it is believed by the Theosophical Society long before the understanding of religious pluralism spreading around the 20th century's.

The rally point of interfaith for the Theosophical Society is exist because essentially everything comes from the same source. Blavatsky explained the common origin of man as follow:

“... that the root of all nature, objective and subjective, and everything else in the universe, visible and invisible, is, was, and ever will be one absolute essence, from the which all starts , and into the which everything returns. This is Aryan philosophy, fully represented only by the Vedanta and the Buddhist system. With this object in view, it is the duty of all Theosophists to promote in every

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<sup>159</sup> Adnin Armas, “Kritik terhadap Gagasan Titik Temu Antar Agama”, on [www.hidayatullah.com](http://www.hidayatullah.com), accessed on Monday, February 19, 2018.

<sup>160</sup> Adnin Armas, “Kritik terhadap Gagasan Titik Temu Antar Agama”, on [www.hidayatullah.com](http://www.hidayatullah.com), accessed on Monday, February 19, 2018.

practical way, and in all countries, the spread of non-sectarian education.”<sup>161</sup>

Regarding to this understanding, The Holy Qur’an itself criticizes the esoteric dimension of other religions. If it does, then in Islam there will be no mention *shirk*, *pagan*, and *proselytizing*.<sup>162</sup> Allah S.W.T sent prophets to preach is precisely because of the esoteric level too there is a difference. In the esoteric dimension of Islam, religion can not be separated with its exoteric dimensions, they must become one. *Ma’rifat* and *haqiqah* be in line with *tariqahshari’a*.<sup>163</sup>

The idea of intersections between religions want to justify all religions. In fact, not all religions are true, because other religions except Islam are no longer authentic. In addition, the intersections between religions also do not occur at the level of esoteric because each religion has a concept of God that is exclusive or different from each other. Allah confirms who assume that Jesus (peace be upon him) is God, including those who disbelieve. Allah says which means: “*Certainly they disbelieve who say: Surely Allah, He is the Messiah, son of Marium; and the Messiah said: O Children of Israel! serve Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Surely whoever associates (others) with Allah, then Allah has forbidden to him the garden, and his abode is the fire; and there shall be no helpers for the unjust.*”<sup>164</sup>

Allah also says which means:

“*Certainly they disbelieve who say: Surely Allah is the third (person) of the three; and there is no God but the one God, and if they desist not from what they say, a painful chastisement shall befall Reviews those among them who disbelieve.*”<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 31

<sup>162</sup> Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, *MISYKAT: Refleksi tentang Islam, Westernisasi & Liberalisasi*, (Jakarta: INSISTS, 2012), p. 191

<sup>163</sup> Adnin Armas, *Gagasan Frithjof Schuon tentang Titik Temu Antar Agama*, p. 16

<sup>164</sup> Al-Maidah [5]: 72

<sup>165</sup> Al-Maidah [5]: 73

So, the idea of the Intersection of religions at the level of esoteric believed by Schuon and theosophical in fact is accurately incompatible with the teachings and principles of Islam. Because there is a fundamental difference between Islam and other religions.

Thus the teachings of theosophy, that if we observe carefully, are so similar and identical to what is provided by the doctrine of religious pluralism. In fact, the existence of the Theosophical Society itself has been around since long before the doctrine of religious pluralism emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which then spread to all over the world, infiltrates and permeates the thought of every one. Then, the researcher see that the idea of religious pluralism that we now know is the new face of the old teachings as believed and taught by Theosophical Society.

This understanding is so dangerous and aims to undermine and destroy the basic principles of religions, including Islam, it is keep trying to still exist and renescent. Not much to observe, that the doctrine of Theosophy does not disappear or die, he spread in line with the spread of the doctrine of religious pluralism. A picture of the future of Theosophical Society itself, it has been predicted and described by Blavatsky in her book, *The Key to Theosophy*. He was so confident and optimistic that in its development, theosophy will slowly penetrate and merge with the thinking of all mankind, destroy bulkhead between caste and beliefs, and pave the way for the realization of the universal brotherhood of humanity in the world. Let us see what she wrote in the end of her work:

“... the Society will live on into and through the Twentieth Century. It will gradually leaven and permeate the great mass of thinking and intelligent people with its large-minded and noble ideas of Religion, Duty, and Philanthropy. Slowly but surely it will burst asunder the iron fetters of Creeds and dogmas, of social and caste prejudices; it will break down racial and national antipathies and barriers, and



will open the way to the practical réalisation of the Brotherhood of all men. Through its teaching, through the philosophy of the which it has rendered accessible and intelligible to the modern mind, the West will learn to understand and appreciate the East at its true value. Further, the development of the psychic powers and Faculties, the premonitory symptoms of the which are already visible in America, will proceed healthily and normally. Mankind will be saved from the terrible Dangers, both mental and bodily, the which are Inevitable when that unfolding takes place, as it Threatens to do, in a hot-bed of selfishness and all evil passions. Man's mental and psychic growth will proceed in harmony with his moral improvement, while his material surroundings will reflect the peace and fraternal good will roomates will reign in his mind, instead of the Discord and Strife the which is everywhere apparent around us today.<sup>166</sup>



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<sup>166</sup> Helena P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, p. 194



## CHAPTER FOUR

### CLOSING

#### 4.1 Conclusions

After researching and analyzing about the similarity between the doctrines of religious pluralism with the teaching of the Theosophical Society, the researcher concludes that:

As an organization based on freedom, equality and brotherhood, so then the core teachings of Theosophical Society are so much in line with the doctrine of religious pluralism. In their belief, the existing religion, as long as it upholds humanity and spreads virtue, then they are same. There is no religion higher than truth, the truth is belong to all religions. This was the basic principle of theosophists on looking at the religions.

The other teaching of theosophy is devoted to humanity. It aims to reconcile all religions, sects, and nations under a common system of ethics, based on eternal verities, upholding the universal values of humanity to create the universal human brotherhood, and showed that all religions are derived from the same source. In fact, the tip of it all is the creation of the concept of “perfect man”, is the concept of unity of being with God, so that man could be positioned as a God, as it is founded in the teaching of secular humanism.

Theosophy also teaches about the understanding of esoteric (inner) and exoteric (outer). That all religions have a common faith in the inner level that became the meeting point of the religions. All religions are differ in practice and behavior. They frequently said that the practice of worship in every religion is different, but actually lead to the same God. There is only One God of many religions, which only different in the names. Whereas “religion” is seen as a human response to the Transcendent Reality (God).

That such of view was so similar with what be believed by the propagandist of doctrine of religious pluralism, which called by doctrine of Sophia perennis/Perennial philosophy/ Transcendent unity of religions and Global Theology.

Basically, the Theosophical Society also embraced the teaching of syncretism and the variety of the ancient wisdom of the great world's religions. The theosophical teachings were derived from the perennial wisdom in Jewish, Christianity, Hindu, Buddhism, Zoroastrian, Phytagoras, Socrates, Eclectic philosophy, and so on. Theosophy holds that truth does not belong to any particular religion, but those religions are mutually complementary, even the complete truth can be found only in the combined views of all (religions). Moreover, the theosophists denied the existence of absolute truth claims, as propagated by the bearers of doctrine of religious pluralism.

Thus the teachings of the Theosophical Society are so similar to what is provided by the doctrine of religious pluralism. In fact, the existence of the Theosophical Society itself has been around since long before the spreading of the doctrine of religious pluralism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Then, the researcher saw that the idea of religious pluralism that we now know is the new face of the old teachings as believed and taught by Theosophical Society. This understanding is so dangerous and incompatible to the Islamic teaching. It actually aims to undermine and destroy the basic principles of religions, including Islam. It is lamentable that no many people realize that the teachings of theosophy still run together with the spreading of the doctrine of religious pluralism.

#### **4.2 Suggestions**

The teachings of Theosophical Society are contrary to the creed of Islam. The theosophical beliefs of God, religion, nature and humanity are incompatible to the basic principles of Islam. So it is the time for all Muslims

to be aware of the latent danger of theosophical teachings which currently permeate and infiltrate into the midst of mankind's life through a various names and appearances, as well as such programs that seems thrusting the universal brotherhood of humanity forward.

All members of religious community especially those are muslim, hoped to well understand towards the rising religious equalization phenomenon. Many terms of truth and some attractive phrasal are even now propagated by those who called as "scholars" by the community. Rather than regarding tolerance and creating peace, that such doctrine and teachings are precisely aimed at the destruction of basic principle of religions and creeds.

#### **4.3 Closing**

Finally, this research about the doctrine of religious pluralism in the teachings of the Theosophical Society has been fully completed. But the researcher realized that this work obviously apart from sufficiently perfect. Thus, the correction, suggestion and criticism are expected in every side of this study in case of the perfect work as the great contribution especially in the field of religious studies.

Hoped this work can be useful generally for all of mankind and especially to all of Muslim in the world. All praises and thank to my Lord, Allah, for the love, guidance, and strength to face all obstacles in completing this work. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), how much I thank you as you have introduced me to my God and religion.



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