

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of Study

Researching and studying religion is interesting, because religion is intended for humans. This is because religion in contemporary religious discourse is explained that “religion” turns out to have many faces (multifaces) and is no longer related solely to issues of divinity, belief, faith, guidelines for life, and so on. In addition to its characteristics and confessional nature, which indeed assumes that religious issues are solely a matter of divinity, religion is also closely related to historical cultural issues which are also entirely human conditions.¹

Religion is a guideline that teaches humans to always be in harmony with all living things in the world, including fellow humans. According to Emile Durkheim, religion has two types of social functions, namely cultural and structural. The cultural function of religion acts as a foundation for social norms built in a community. In its cultural function, religion provides a foundation for spiritual values that become a force in controlling the order of society. An example of a cultural function is the prohibitions in religious teachings, which include the prohibition of insulting and hating other religions. Conversely, religion teaches to respect and love fellow human beings regardless of their religion. Meanwhile, the structural function of religion is related to its social dimension, where religion acts as an institutional structure in society. In its function, religion serves as an adhesive that unites its members in a moral community.²

Religion is also a behavior that exists in the realm of reality and therefore can be observed and researched. It can be said that religious phenomena and social phenomena go hand in hand. When social phenomena change, it will be followed by changes in religious phenomena, and vice versa. Religious behavior is actually

¹ Ismail, *Sejarah Agama-Agama (Pengantar Studi Agama-Agama)* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2017), 1–2.

² J. Dewi Narwoko and Bagong Suryanto, *Sosiologi Teks Pengantar Dan Terapan* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2005), 4.

human behavior, society, and culture. In short, the reality of religion (religious life) is also a socio-cultural reality.³

Throughout history, religion has contributed positively to society by fostering brotherhood and a spirit of cooperation among community members. However, religion has also often been a trigger for conflict between religious communities. This is the negative side of religion in influencing society and has happened in several places. Sam Harris, a new-atheist figure from the United States, states that the existence of religion creates hostility, division and social tension. Religion, according to him, leads to wars, and religion is at the heart of these wars. Religion is often used as a source of justification for war.⁴ In contrast to these anti-religious groups, pro-religious groups use religious approaches to promote peace and the common good. One Muslim figure from Turkey, Fethullah Gulen, uses the approach of teachings in Islam to spread tolerance that leads to the creation of peace. Gulen uses a pattern of non-violent and peace-loving thinking that is sourced from religious texts.⁵

Starting from the awareness of the phenomenon of religious diversity, which is a fact and reality faced by humans today, there must be an awareness that multiculturalism and pluralism are truly the nature of human life. So it is hoped that humans will be able to appreciate this diversity.⁶ For example, when there is a religious ceremony from one of the religious groups, people who have different beliefs will show tolerance or respect for other religions that are celebrating their religious ceremonies without any actions that trigger noise when the religious ceremony is taking place. Another example of mutual respect between one religion and another is the existence of a community that brings together young people from various backgrounds of different beliefs, but when those young people gather together we can see how much the concept of tolerance and mutual respect is understood and applied.

³ J. Dewi Narwoko and Bagong Suryanto, *Sosiologi Teks Pengantar Dan Terapan* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2005). 4.

⁴ Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terro, and the Future of Reason* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004).

⁵ Gürkan Çelik, *The Gülen Movement: Building Social Cohesion through Dialogue and Education* (Delft: Eburon, 2010).98

⁶ Media Zainul Bahri, *Wajah Studi Agama – Agama: Dari Era Teosofi Indonesia (1901-1940) Sampai Masa Reformasi* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Belajar, 2015).26

Maturity in individual religious life will be able to integrate or unite religious teachings in all aspects of life. In particular, mature religiosity will encourage people to behave in accordance with religious teachings in every aspect of life.

The phenomenon of interfaith encounters has sharpened, complicated, and consequently changed the way religious adherents understand themselves, even as they continue to insist on their uniqueness and incomparability. The fact of the plurality of living religious traditions now afflicts believers of all traditions and strongly influences how such believers think about themselves, their theology, and their most fundamental beliefs.⁷

The study of comparative theology has gained attention in the academic world of modern theology as a response to the increasing plurality of religions and cultures in the era of globalization. Comparative theology, as an approach to understanding the similarities and differences between various religious traditions, has become a focus of attention for many theologians and religious scholars.⁸

Every theological and religious tradition has comparative theology as a fundamental component. Through the process of appropriating, disputing, and reinterpreting aspects of other religious traditions, religions have evolved their doctrines, practices, and sense of self over time. Through a process of acceptance and rejection, every new religion builds upon the foundations of its predecessors while remaining deeply reliant on them. Furthermore, throughout history, faiths have continued to intentionally or unintentionally adopt the doctrines and practices of other religions, even when they conflict or coexist in the same cultural space. As a result, religious development and transformation via exposure to the doctrines and practices of other faiths is as old as religion itself.⁹

⁷ Francis X. Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God: How Reason Helps Break down the Boundaries between Religions* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).⁷

⁸ *Ibid.*¹¹

⁹ Catherine Cornille, *Meaning and Method in Comparative Theology* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020). 1

The deliberate, transparent, and methodical involvement of other faiths in the theological growth process is what is novel in the contemporary field of comparative theology. Comparative theology publicly recognizes and credits other religions as a potential source of helpful theological inspiration and understanding, whereas religious borrowing has historically occurred unintentionally or without disclosing its source. Both historical and theological changes, as well as the notable scholarly advancements in the study of religions during the past century, have contributed to this attitude of humility and charity toward other religions.¹⁰

Comparative theology blends elements of both religious studies and theology. It draws on the historical and comparative study of religions, benefiting from a wealth of scholarly research and an appreciation for the complexity and variety within religious traditions. This approach emphasizes the importance of closely examining specific texts, teachings, or practices, and recognizes the difficulties and uncertainties involved in applying insights from one tradition to another. As Kimberley Patton vividly describes, comparing religions is like "juggling torches"—done carelessly, it can be harmful, but handled skillfully, it can be enlightening. Comparative theologians are therefore expected to study another religion deeply, learning its language, history, and cultural context to interpret texts accurately and make meaningful comparisons. Like theology, comparative theology aims not only to better understand particular religious elements but also to seek insight into ultimate truth and reality. It is a normative discipline, rooted in faith perspectives, and seeks to deepen theological understanding through interreligious engagement.

One figure who has made significant contributions to the field of comparative theology is Francis Clooney. As a prominent Catholic theologian and scholar of comparative religion, Clooney has presented a rich and profound view of the importance of interreligious dialog and understanding across religious traditions.

¹⁰ Cornille, *Meaning and Method in Comparative Theology* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020).

Clooney's work emphasizes the importance of understanding cultural and historical contexts in comparing interfaith theologies, as well as encouraging building bridges of understanding between different religious traditions while appreciating the diversity that exists within them.¹¹

However, although there have been in-depth studies of Clooney's thought in various contexts, there is still a need for further research that specifically explores his views on comparative theology. Therefore, this study aims to examine Francis Clooney's thoughts on comparative theology, analyze his approach, and evaluate its relevance in the context of theology and religious studies today.

By elucidating Clooney's views on comparative theology, it is hoped that this research can make a meaningful contribution to the development of comparative theological thought and broaden our understanding of interfaith dialog and cooperation across religious traditions in this increasingly complex global context.

1.2. Problem Formulation

Based on the foregoing, this study seeks to answers to the following research question:

1. What is Comparative Theology According to Francis X. Clooney?
2. What is the significance of clooney's comparative theology in study of religions?

1.3. Purpose of Study

Based on the background and problem formulation as described above, this research aims to :

1. To know comparative theology according to Francis X. Clooney
2. To know the significance of clooney's comparative theology in study of religions

¹¹ S. Mark Heim, "Comparative Theology at Twenty-Five: The End of the Beginning," *Modern Theology* 35, no. 1 (January 2019): 163–80, <https://doi.org/10.1111/moth.12450>.

1.4. Significance of Study

This research is expected to offer several contribution:

1. Theoretical

- a. In general, to add insight to researcher and readers regarding the thought of Francis X. Clooney's thoughts.
- b. To answer the thoughts of the most prominent theological figure Francis X. Clooney's thoughts on modern comparative theology.

2. Practical:

- a. This research can be additional information in religious studies study program especially in research related to comparative theology issues.
- b. So that this research can be a scientific contributions that is jariah for the treasure of knowledge in the ushuluddin faculty in particular and Darussalam University in general.

1.5. Literature Review

As for some research related to the writing of this thesis, the author takes several studies including the following:

First, the thesis with the title "Studi atas "Peran Maria" dalam surah-surah Al-Qur'an terutama surah Maryam dan Injil Lukas dalam Analisa teologi komparatif Francis X. Clooney", 2019, the thesis was prepared by Joseph Biondi Mattovano, a student of the philosophy of divinity program at Sanata Dharma University Yogyakarta. In this study, it discusses the conception of Maryam's role in the Qur'an and the Gospels using the comparative theology of Francis X. Clooney's theology.¹²

¹² Joseph Biondi Mattovano, *Studi atas "Peran Maria" dalam surah-surah Al-Qur'an terutama surah Maryam dan Injil Lukas dalam Analisa teologi komparatif Francis X. Clooney*, [Skripsi Program Studi Filsafat Keilahian], Yogyakarta, Fakultas Teologi Universitas Santa Dharma, 2019.

Second, a thesis with the title *Teologi Komparatif sebagai jalan meperdalam dan memperkaya refleksi teologi kristiani serta resolusi konflik antar agama, menelaah pemikiran Cahterine Cornile*”, in 2023, the thesis was prepared by Kristianus Nahak, a student of the philosophy of divinity program at Sanata Dharma University Yogyakarta. This research discusses Cornile's thoughts on comparative theology, methods, and conditions so that comparative theology can be used in the Indonesian context.¹³

Third, a thesis with title *“Comparative Theology: A Perspective Toward A Post-Conciliar Theology In The Context of Religius Plurality”*, in 2002, the thesis was prepared by Yohanes Berchmans Prasetyantha, a student of dogmatic theology program at Pontifica Gregorian University. This thesis discusses comparative theology that focuses on the post-conciliar approach and the figures used are not specific.¹⁴

Fourth, a thesis with title *“Mengatasi kekerasan dengan Pengendalian Diri Belajar dari Pengendalian Diri (Bodicitta) Yang Maha Suci Dalai lama XIV dengan berteologi Komparatif Menurut Francis X. Clooney*, in 2022, the thesis was prepared by Corinthiani Perbina Sinulingga, a student of faculty of theology at Kristen Duta Wacana University. This thesis compares the concept of Bodhicitta in Buddhism (Dalai Lama XIV) with Christianity through Clooney's comparative theology approach. While the research explains the basic concepts and methods of Clooney in comparative theology.¹⁵

¹³ Kristianus Nahak, *Teologi Komparatif sebagai jalan meperdalam dan memperkaya refleksi teologi kristiani serta resolusi konflik antar agama, menelaah pemikiran Cahterine Cornile*, [Skripsi Program Studi Filsafat Keilahian], Yogyakarta, Fakultas Teologi Universitas Santa Dharma, 2023.

¹⁴Yohanes Berchmans Prasetyantha, *Comparative Theology: A Perspective Toward A Post-Conciliar Theology In The Context of Religius Plurality*, [Thesis of Dogmatic Theology Program], Rome, Faculty of Theology Gregorian University, 2002.

¹⁵ Corinthiani Perbina Sinulingga, *Mengatasi kekerasan dengan Pengendalian Diri Belajar dari Pengendalian Diri (Bodicitta) Yang Maha Suci Dalai lama XIV dengan berteologi Komparatif Menurut Francis X. Clooney*, [Skripsi Program Studi Filsafat Keilahian], Yogyakarta, Fakultas Teologi Universitas Duta Wacana, 2022.

Fifth, a scientific journal with the title “Comparative Theology At Twenty-Five: The End Of Beginning”, in 2018 written by S.Mark Heim. This article highlights the general development of comparative theology over the past 25 years and reviews some other figures such as Raimon Panikkar, Keith Ward, and David Burrell. The difference with my research, I will discuss how comparative theology according to the perspective of Francis x Clooney

Sixth, a scientific journal with the title “Teologi Komparatif Bagi Tradisi Reformed di Indonesia: Sebuah Proposal”, in 2022, written by Lefrandy Praditya from the Southeast Asian Biblical Seminary School of Theology, published by Verbum Christi Evangelical Reformed Theology Journal vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 87-110. 87-110.¹⁶ This journal frames comparative theology for practical religious harmony in Indonesia, The difference with previous research is that this research does not discuss francis x clooney in particular.

Seventh, a scientific journal with the title “Veli-Matti Karkkainen, Doing the Work of Comparative Theology” in 2023, written by Lefrandy Praditya from the Southeast Asian Bible Seminary School of Theology, published by the Indonesian Journal of Theology vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 102-104.¹⁷ This article only mentions Francis X. Clooney briefly as part of a broader discussion on comparative theology, positioning him as one of the figures who has contributed to the method of comparative religion, but without elaborating on his ideas. The discussion in this article focuses more on the work of Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen and his approach to comparative theology, to which Clooney is referred as a complement. Meanwhile, the second article specifically discusses Clooney's thoughts and contributions in depth, including his methodological approach,

¹⁶ Lefrandy Praditya, “Teologi Komparatif Bagi Tradisi Reformed Di Indonesia: Sebuah Proposal,” *VERBUM CHRISTI JURNAL TEOLOGI REFORMED INJILI* 9, no. 1 (April 25, 2022): 87–110, <https://doi.org/10.51688/VC9.1.2022.art5>.

¹⁷ Lefrandy Praditya, “Doing the Work of Comparative Theology: A Primer for Christians: By Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen,” *Indonesian Journal of Theology* 8, no. 1 (January 27, 2023): 102–4, <https://doi.org/10.46567/ijt.v8i1.128>.

and how he developed the concepts of scriptural reasoning and deep learning in comparative theology.

1.6. Theoretical Framework

Based on the foregoing, this study aims to comprehensively examine Francis X. Clooney's contributions to comparative theology. Therefore, a Philosophy Approach is employed. The philosophical approach seeks to understand and examine in depth the ideas, concepts, and ideas put forward by a figure. This approach emphasizes critical analysis of the structure of thought, basic assumptions, as well as the historical and social context that influenced the development of these ideas. The aim is to reveal the essence or nature of the figure's thought, as well as its relevance in the contemporary context.¹⁸ This can help researchers in understanding the rationale of Francis X. Clooney's thoughts on Comparative Theology.

Comparative theology is an approach to the study of religion that emphasizes deep engagement with religious texts and practices from other traditions, while remaining rooted in the researcher's own faith tradition. In this context, comparative theology is not simply descriptive comparative study, but transformative theological reflection. The main figure to be studied is Francis X. Clooney, who pioneered this approach in the realm of Catholic theology by opening a space for serious dialogue between Christianity and Hinduism.¹⁹

Religious studies as an academic field aims to understand religious phenomena critically, historically and systematically. Comparative theology contributes to the study of religion by offering an approach that balances faith engagement and academic method.

1.7. Method of Research

a. Kind of Research

¹⁸ Peter Connolly, ed., *Approaches to the Study of Religion*, Reprinted (London: Continuum, 2002), 105–107.

¹⁹ Paul F Kinitter, *Pengantar Teologi Agama-Agama* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2008).

To obtain scientific information in this study, researchers used library research, which is research that relies on the collection, analysis, and interpretation of information in the form of narratives and visuals (not numbers) to gain a deep understanding of certain interesting phenomena. Writing methodology is an activity in the form of taking information in the form of data, analyzing and conveying understanding related to the purpose of writing.²⁰ The researcher uses a qualitative inductive writing method by analyzing the comparative theology of Francis X. Clooney and its significance in the study of religion. This method is a method of exploration and interpretation, which means that some individuals or groups of people evaluate social or humanitarian issues.

Through this type of research, the researcher hopes to obtain new data and knowledge by reading various books and studying various information related to his research.

b. Source of Data

Because this is a qualitative research, the researcher collects many books, papers, and other documents to achieve the expected results and obtain the necessary data and information. Data and information can be obtained from two types of sources: Primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources or primary sources are:

1. Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders²¹
2. Hindu God, Christian God: how reason helps break down the boundaries between religions²²
3. The new comparative theology: interreligious insights from the next generation²³

²⁰ Sutanto Leo, *Kiat Jitu Menulis Skripsi, Tesis, Dan Disertasi* (Jakarta: Penerbit Erlangga, 2013), hlm. 100.

²¹ Heim, "Comparative Theology at Twenty-Five."

²² Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God*.

²³ Francis X. Clooney, "The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the next Generation," 2010.

Meanwhile, secondary sources are sources obtained by researchers from papers, journals, or articles related to the theme of their research.

c. The Technique of Data Analysis

After data processing is complete, the next process is to analyze it to get a complete description of the problem that is the object of research. The process of analyzing the various findings above is assisted by several techniques, namely:

1. Descriptive Method

Descriptive method is a research method carried out on independent variables without making comparisons or connecting with other variables, so the variables studied are independent. The aims of this research is to describe precisely the characteristics of an individual, situation, symptom, or certain group or to determine the spread of a symptom.²⁴

2. Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research method used to analyze and understand the content of communication systematically, objectively, and quantitatively. This method aims to identify specific characteristics of messages in various forms of media, such as text, images, or audio, in order to reveal certain patterns, themes, or meanings. the application of content analysis plays an important role in understanding and examining Clooney's works and contributions to comparative theology.²⁵

1.8. Systematic of Study

The next step taken by the researcher so that his research can be organized systematically and arrive at the expected target so that readers can later understand easily, the researcher compiled the chapters of his research as follows:

²⁴ Sugiyono, *METODE PENELITIAN KUANTITATIF DAN KUALITATIF DAN R&B* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2018).

²⁵ Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler, *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, Routledge Handbooks (London New York: Routledge, 2011), 109.

Chapter I: namely the introduction, this chapter consists of background, problem formulation, research objectives, research benefits, literature review, research methods, and systematic discussion.

Chapter II: in this chapter the author will discuss the biography of Francis X. Clooney, his works, and the comparative theology of study of religion

Chapter III: researchers will discuss the contribution of Clooney's thinking to comparative theology, Clooney's approach to Comparative Theology, Clooney's concept of interfaith dialog,

Chapter IV: consists of the conclusions of the discussion reached by researchers, and suggestions.

