



الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية ماليزيا
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC THOUGHT
IN INDONESIA (1970 - 1990s): A STUDY
OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF
NURCHOLISH MADJID AND
ABDURRAHMAN WAHID**

BY

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ISLAMIC
REVEALED KNOWLEDGE AND HERITAGE
(UŞUL AL-DĪN AND COMPARATIVE RELIGION)**

**KULLIYAH OF ISLAMIC REVEALED
KNOWLEDGE AND HUMAN SCIENCES
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
MALAYSIA**

MARCH 2001

ABSTRACT

This study examines contemporary Islamic Thought in Indonesia which stretches between 1970-1990s. In particular, it discusses the renewal religious thought of Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid pertinent to three issues namely; their approach in understanding the Holy *Qur'ân*, Islam *vis a vis* the state ideology; *Pancasila*, and Islamic viewpoint on pluralism. The study deploys historical, comparative, and critical approaches. It relies on the primary sources which consist of the writings of both scholars as well as secondary sources which are composed of the writings of other scholars on them.

The study reveals that the renewal thought espoused by Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid has been largely affected by socio-political climate of Muslim *ummah* of 1970-1990s. Partly, their thought is a response to the challenges posed by Soeharto's New Order regime. They seek to reconcile between the universality Islamic teachings and the particularity of Indonesian local culture. They attempt to implement *Qur'anic* injunctions according to Indonesian socio-cultural context without conflicting with the national interest. In doing this, they have devised hermeneutical and contextual approaches to understand the Holy *Qur'ân*. The approaches suggest that the Holy *Qur'ân* should be interpreted and applied contextually not literally.

Nurcholish and Abdurrahman oppose the concept of Islamic state. Firstly, this is because such a state has never been in existence in Islamic history and secondly is due to the lack of *Qur'anic* evidences. They claim that the Holy *Qur'ân* never mandates the establishment of such a state. They insist on the separation between religion and politics claiming that Islam better serves as social ethos rather than political forces. They assert that *Pancasila* is the final ideology to Indonesia. It serves

as a common denominator for Indonesian society. They are of the belief that there is no reason for Muslims to reject this state ideology because the values it contains conforming to Islamic teaching.

Nurcholish and Abdurrahman call on Muslims to embrace the principle of pluralism, develop tolerant and inclusivistic attitude because this principle is firmly rooted in the Holy *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* of the Prophet. It is based on the notion of universality and humanity of Islam and has been practiced by early Muslims.

ملخص البحث

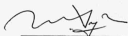
تستعرض هذه الدراسة الفكر الإسلامي المعاصر في إندونيسيا ما بين السبعينيات و التسعينيات. وتركز على الفكر الديني التحديدي لكل من نور خالص مجيد و عبد الرحمن وحيد فيمط يتعلق بالأمور الثلاثة الآتية : منهجها في فهم القرآن الكريم و موقف الإسلام من أيديولوجية الدولية الإندونيسية (البنحاسيلا) ، وموقف الإسلام من التعددية . ويعتمد البحث المنهج التاريخي النقدي المقارن معتمداً على المصادر الأولية المتمثلة في أعمال هذين المفكرين فضلاً عن المصادر الثانوية المتمثلة في كتابات الآخرين عنهم.

خلصت هذه الدراسة إلى أن الفكر التحديدي الذي روح له نور خالص مجيد وعبد الرحمن وحيد تأثر بالوضع الاجتماعي والسياسي للأمة الإسلامية في خلال السبعينيات والتسعينيات. و بعد - إلى حد بعيد- رد فعل للتحديات التي أثارها النظام الجديد من حكومة سوهارتو. فقد حاولا التوفيق بين عالمية التعاليم الإسلامية وخاصة الثقافة المحلية الإندونيسية. ولأجل هذا ، نجدهما نجحا المنهج التوفيقى (hermeneutics) الواقعي في تفسير و تطبيق التعاليم القرآنية. و في ضوء هذا المنهج ، فإن المفسر يجيز تغيير بعض الأحكام المنصوصة في القرآن حسب التقاليد و القيم السائدة في المجتمع مادامت المقاصد العامة التي من أجلها نزل القرآن محققة. وهذا المنهج قد اتبعه كثير من المفكرين المعاصرين.

يعارض كل من نور خالص و عبد الرحمن وحيد فكرة الدولة الإسلامية بحجة أنها لم تقم في أية لحظة في التاريخ الإسلامي و أن القرآن لم يوجب إقامة مثل هذه الدولة. وهما يدعوان إلى الفصل بين الدين و السياسة ويدعيان أن الدين إنما هو لخدمة الجانب الاجتماعي العقدي أكثر منه للسياسة. ويريان أن "بنحاسيلا" يمثل الأيديولوجية الأخيرة و المثلى لإندونيسيا و لا يوجد أي مسرر للمسلمين لمعارضتها لأن القيم التي تتضمنها متماشية مع التعاليم الإسلامية. كما يدعوان المسلمين إلى قبول مبدأ التعددية و تطوير صفة التسامح بحجة أن هذا المبدأ مؤصل في القرآن الكريم و السنة النبوية و عمل المسلمين الأوائل، فضلاً عن أنه يعكس عالمية و إنسانية الإسلام.


APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it confirms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge in Uşul al- Din and Islamic Thought.




Dr. Wan Sabri Wan Yusuf
Supervisor

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it confirms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge in Uşul al- Din and Islamic Thought.




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This thesis was submitted to the Department of Uşul al-Din and Comparative Religion and is accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge in Uşul al-Din and Islamic Thought.



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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references and a bibliography is appended.

Name: Nirwan Syafrin

Signature: 

Date: 5/4/2001

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I dedicated this thesis to my beloved father the late Abdul Roni Manurung, the one who had taught the value of life and the meaning of responsibility and to my dearest mother Haninah Panjaitan who has brought me up with affection and compassion

اللهم اغفر لهما و ارحهما كما ربياني صغيرا

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My utmost gratitude goes to Almighty Allah *tabāraka wa ta'ālā* for His Mercy and Compassion bestowed to me. I would like to express my gratefulness to those who have assisted me in completing this thesis. I am in particular grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Wan Sabri Wan Yusuf for his advice and guidance. My thankful also extends to Dr. Abdul Salam @ Zulkifli Muhammad Shukri for his kindness to examine and provide necessary correction to this thesis. I would like to record my appreciation to my lecturers in the International Islamic University Malaysia who have sincerely and generously imparted on me countless valuable knowledge. I am also thankful to Dr. Sohirin Solihin for making me aware of the important of the topic of this thesis. I am extremely indebted to my parents, Haninah Panjaitan and the late Abdul Roni Manurung (may Allah bless him) for their invaluable effort to bring me up till I can reach at the present stage. I wish to extend my special thanks to my sister Fathiah Manurung, all my brothers, Syaiful Zuhri Manurung, Syafrinal Manurung, Ahmad Fauzi Manurung, and Zaharuddin Manurung for their encouragement and support. Finally, I would like to express my invaluable appreciation and thankful to all my colleagues M. Sabri Abdul Majid, Lukman Sharif, Ahmad Fitriannahar, Raja Ibadiassyakur and others whose name I cannot list all here who have assisted me in various ways.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

ABRI	: Angkatan Bersenjata Republik Indonesia (Indonesian Armed forces)
BPUPK	: Badan Persiapan untuk Proklamasi Kemerdekaan (Investigating Committee for Independence Proclamation)
DPR	: Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (People Representative Council)
GOLKAR	: Golongan Karya
HMI	: Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (Muslim Student Association)
ICMI	: Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia (Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Association)
MASYUMI	: Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia (Modernist Islamic Party)
MPR	: Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat (People Consultative Council)
NU	: Nahdhatul Ulama (Muslim Scholars Awakening)
P4	: Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila (Guidance for Understanding and Implementing Pancasila)
PDI	: Partai Demokrasi Indonesia (Indonesian Democracy Party)
PKI	: Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party)
PII	: Pelajar Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Muslim Students)
PPP	: Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (Unity Development Party)
Parmusi	: Partai Muslimin Indonesia (Indonesian Muslims Party)
PRRI	: Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia (Revolutionary Government of Republic Indonesia)
TNI	: Tentara Negara Indonesia (Indonesian Armed Forces)

TRANSLITERATION

أ a	ط t
ب b	ظ z
ت t	ع 'e
ث th	غ gh
ج j	ف f
ح h	ق q
خ kh	ك k
د d	ل l
ذ dh	م m
ر r	ن n
ز z	و w
س s	ه h
ش sh	ي y
ص s	ء 'a
ض d	

Short Vowels

a	َ
إ	ِ
u	ُ

Long Vowels

آ ā āmana	آمن
إِ ī īman	إيمان
و ū ūrah	سورة

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Nurcholish Madjid (1939-) and Abdurrahman Wahid (1940-) are considered among the most outstanding contemporary Muslim scholars in Indonesia. Nowadays they stand at the forefront of Islamic reform and renewal and became the main authoritative references, along with others, in the religious as well as the political spheres. Their views and ideas are frequently cited in the mass media either to oppose or to justify a particular stand.

It is important to note, however, that Islamic reform espoused by Nurcholish and Abdurrahman is different from the one advocated by the earliest Indonesian Muslim reformists like K.H. Ahmad Dahlan (1868-1923), A. Hassan (b.1887), Ahmad Soorkatti (1911-1943) and others. Such a difference principally lies, among others, in the goal that they seek to achieve and the way they approach the very sources of Islam; the Holy *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (pbuh), and the principle of *ijtihad*. Whilst the earlier reformists concentrate basically on purification of Islamic teachings from *bid'ah* and *khurafat* (unlawful innovations), both Nurcholish and Abdurrahman stress primarily on reinvigoration of Islamic doctrines. With regard to *Qur'anic* interpretation, they devise hermeneutic and contextual approaches. These approaches suggest to interpret the Holy *Qur'an* contextually rather than literally and put more emphasis on moral aspect of the revelation instead of its legal aspect. As far as the principle of *ijtihad* is concerned, they approach it in a more liberal and progressive manner in the sense that oftenly they go beyond the views accepted by the four existing schools of Islamic jurisprudence. They insist that the legal rules that made through *ijtihad* should reflect the actual condition of the society. For this reason, when responding to social and political issues, they often try to accommodate the

peculiar characteristics of Indonesian society. In this relation, they therefore propagate the idea of indigenization of Islam (*pribumisasi Islam*). The basic premise of this idea is that "Islamization in Indonesia should not contradict the process of Indonesiaization, for Islam, according to them, is a complementary factor to the Indonesian world-view."¹

Some Muslims in Indonesia consider the renewal ideas propounded by Nurcholish and Aburrahman as liberal and deleterious to the established Islamic faith but not few also perceive the same ideas as progressive. This sort of ideas is in fact not entirely new in Islamic thought even though it seems to be so in Indonesia. Such similar ideas can be traced in thought of many modern and contemporary Muslim scholars. A scholar like Fazlur Rahman (1918-1986)² in this regard is worthy to be mentioned for he has pivotally played a decisive role in the fashioning of Nurcholish's thought and of Abdurrahman's to a significant degree. Apart from Rahman, both Nurcholish and Abdurrahman have also immensely owed to western scholarship. When arguing for a particular issue, they frequently refer to western literature to support their opinion. They also always use western methodology to explicate the Islamic doctrines in their relation to modern times. This, however, does not mean that they totally neglect the classical Islamic literature. They do also refer to these

¹Sirajuddin M. Syamsuddin, *Religion and Politics in Islam: The Case of Muhammadiyah in Indonesia's New Order* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles: UMI, 1991), 287.

²Fazlur Rahman (1918-1986) is a Pakistani born Muslim scholar. He migrated to America due to intense pressure from 'ulama who had condemned him as an infidel following the publication of his book *Islam* in which he described that the Holy *Qur'an* as "entirely the Words of God and, in an ordinary sense, also entirely the word of Muhammad". Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 31. He had a direct contact with Indonesian scholars as early as the 1970s when he visited Indonesia to complete his research project about Islam in various Muslim countries. As he narrates that he was assigned to write "a general work on the medieval Islamic educational system, with its major features and deficiencies, and the modernization efforts undertaken during the past century and so". Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 1. Since that time, Fazlur Rahman seems to have acquired a special place among Indonesian intellectuals. Two Indonesian prominent scholars: Nurcholish Madjid and Syafi'i Ma'arif have come under direct influence of Fazlur Rahman. Both are his students. Nurcholish Madjid completed his Ph.D. dissertation under Fazlur Rahman's supervision.

literatures to seek for theological or legal justification for the views that they stand for. It is primarily due to their ability to combine these two scholarships, many contemporary Indonesianists (experts of Indonesia) consider them as 'neo-modernist' thinkers rather than modernists.³ At present, the typical pattern of Islamic thought which developed by Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid seems to have been very dominant in the public Islamic discourse in Indonesia. Many young Muslim intellectuals nowadays subscribe to their ideas though not a few numbers also strongly oppose such ideas. This phenomenon thus requires a further study and investigation to enable us to assess their thought objectively.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The objective of this study is to critically analyze the religious thought of Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid. In doing this, the study, firstly, explores the phenomenon of the global Islamic resurgence which took place between the 1970s and 1990s and its impact upon the rise of Nurcholish and Abdurrahman. The study furthermore investigates the effect of the policies inaugurated by Soekarno's Old Order and Soeharto's New Order upon Nurcholish's and Abdurrahman's religious ideas. Three main issues that have concerned both intellectual most are selected for discussion namely; the approach to interpretation of the Holy *Qur'ān*, the relationship between Islam and the state ideology; *Pancasila*, Islam *vis a vis* pluralism. A critical examination is attempted after discussing each issue. In this relation, the arguments of their critics are simultaneously examined too. In short, the study shall seek to answer the following questions:

³Fachry Ali and Bahtiar Effendy, *Merambah Jalan Baru Islam* (Bandung: Mizan, 1986), 175 and 177; and Budy-Munawwar Rahman, "Dari Tahapan Moral ke Periode Sejarah: Pemikiran Neo-Modernisme Islam di Indonesia", *Jurnal Ulumul Qur'an*, Vol. 4 (3), 1995, 26.

1. How did the renewal of Islamic thought promoted by Nurcholish and Abdurrahman Wahid emerge against the background of the phenomenon of 1970s global Islamic Resurgence and Indonesian socio-political climate of Old and New Order regime?
2. To what extent do other Muslim intellectuals and western scholars influence their thought?
3. What approaches do they apply when dealing with religious, social and political issues confronted by Indonesian Muslims?
4. What are the arguments of their opponents?

JUSTIFICATION

The study of Nurcholish's and Abdurrahman's religious thought is of profound interest for several reasons. Firstly, since its debut in the 1970s, the renewal of Islamic Thought has captured the attention of many people within and without Indonesia. Public discussions of Nurcholish's ideas in particular had continued over the period of 1970s and widely covered by some mass media such as Panji Masyarakat, Tempo, Kompas, etc. Pro and contra groups soon came to surface. Hitherto, Nurcholish's project to renew Islamic thought is almost thirty years old but his idea remains resonant and influential. Moreover, it seems to crystallize to be one of the major trends of Islamic thought in Indonesia. Many young Muslim intellectuals nowadays subscribe to his ideas. It is believed that even the political elite of Indonesia's New Order regime and their non-Muslim counterparts broadly accommodated their views.

Secondly, the role of Nurcholish and Abdurrahman seems to have become highly crucial after the downfall of Soeharto. This is evidenced by the fact that their views are often consumed in the public discourse in Indonesia. The advocates of the Renewal Movement wrongly or rightly believe that the present Islamic euphoria in

Indonesia is an outcome of the cultural movement (*gerakan budaya*) that Nurcholish and Abdurrahman have promoted for so long. Irrespective of whether or not one agrees with such a claim, their views indeed deserve to be fairly and objectively examined. The study shall confine itself to the period from 1970s until the 1990s excluding the period of Abdurrahman's presidency.

Thirdly, since Nurcholish addressed his renewal project publicly in his speech in January 3, 1972, many critiques and condemnations had been severely leveled to him. Some senior Muslim intellectuals and political leaders like Hamka (1908-1981), M. Natsir (1908-1993), and H.M. Rasjidi (1915-2001) had also engaged in the polemic with Nurcholish. In religious sermons, public and closed-door gatherings, and in their writings, these scholars always reminded the public of the deleterious effect of Nurcholish *cum suis*' renewal project. Along the 1980s and the 1990s, it was Abdurrahman who had become the object of critique. His controversial political moves and provocative religious thought always invited furious reactions from some sections of educated Muslims in Indonesia. Undeniably, some critiques merit academic values, but some are very much emotionally and politically motivated. Due to this fact, the researcher feels that an indepth study and examination of the ideas of Nurcholish and Abdurrahman and of their critics is importantly to be carried out.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs historical, critical, and comparative approaches. It is historical for it seeks to trace the genesis and development of Nurcholish's and Abdurrahman's renewal of Islamic thought in Indonesia against the backdrop of the 1970s socio-political phenomenon of the Muslim *ummah* in general and of Indonesia in particular. In order to reveal similarities between their thought and the thought of

other Muslim scholars, this study therefore employs a comparative approach. The study is also critical in nature for it attempts to show the advantages and shortcomings of their views and the views of their critics.

The study depends on primary as well as secondary sources. The former comes in the form of books or articles written by Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid. Interviews in printed mass media especially magazines are also considered as primary material. In addition, the study also relies on secondary sources, which include books, articles, interviews, etc. where their views and thought are discussed. Books written by their critics are also incorporated into the secondary sources.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous books and articles have been written exploring the phenomenon of Renewal of Islamic Thought Movement in Indonesia in a general manner and of Nurcholish and Abdurrahman in particular. Various aspects of their thought and its implications have been researched. Most of these studies so far have only focused on social and political implication that their thought had on the life of Indonesian Muslims. Their approaches towards understanding the Holy *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (pbuh), to the best of researcher's knowledge, has been seriously neglected and no comparative analysis of their thought with that of other scholars has so far been attempted. This study therefore attempts to probe into these matters critically.

One of the earliest researches discussing the thought of Nurcholish Madjid and his Renewal Islamic Thought Movement is conducted by M. Kamal Hassan in his celebrated book *Muslim Intellectual Responses to New Order" Modernization in*

Indonesia.⁴ The book is primarily aimed to analyze a variety of responses of Muslim intellectuals in Indonesia towards the issue of the modernization which inaugurated by the New Order regime. He classifies the responses into three categories; idealist, reformist, and accommodationist and puts Nurcholish and his *pembaharuan* group into the last category similar to that of Mintaredja. According to Kamal Hassan the emergence of *pembaharuan* movement "stemmed from internal imperatives resulting socio-political change. It was an answer given by a liberal group of Muslims to the challenge which Soeharto's "modernization" of political system posed".⁵ In their attempt to answer to this challenge, they have tried to "to reformulate in general terms the fundamental postulates regarding God, man and the physical world, and he manner of their relationship in the light of new political realities".⁶ By doing so, they expect that they can change the militant and radical image of Muslims into a more moderate and conservative portrayal which support the government's modernization program. Unfortunately, Kamal Hassan notes that, "in trying to change the image of the *ummah*, he has also changed his own image from Nurcholish Madjid, the Islamically oriented to Nurcholish Madjid, the secularist-modernist Indonesian intellectual".⁷ Kamal Hassan thus concludes that the idea of *pembaharuan* group is more of a reflection of "symptomatic of the identity crisis of the Muslim intelligentsia at a time when loyalty to primordial ideals seemed to be in conflict with the goals of the ruling group".⁸ The book in fact is not aimed to study specifically Nurcholish's renewal thought, but the author has dedicated a large portion of his book to discuss his thought and responses

⁴M. Kamal Hassan, *Muslim Intellectual Responses to "New Order" Modernization in Indonesia* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1982).

⁵Ibid., 136.

⁶Ibid., 89.

⁷Ibid., 114.

⁸Ibid., 89-90.

that were given towards it. This study has confined itself to the period of 1966 to 1973. It is undeniable that this book has been of great benefit for the students of Indonesian contemporary Islamic thought. Nevertheless, many subsequent observers like Fachry Ali and Bahtiar Effendy and Greg Barton have challenged the validity of the label 'accommodative' the author uses to describe Nurcholish's renewal thought. They are of the view that such a label seemingly denies the essential contents of Nurcholish's and colleagues' reform project.

Fachry Ali and Bahtiar Effendy in *Merambah Jalan Baru Islam* contend that the ideas promoted by Nurcholish and his colleagues which they term as 'new intellectualism' (*pemikiran baru*) is a timely necessity. For this new thought offers a more practical framework for Muslims to cope with new realities that resulted from the emergence of Soeharto New Order regime.⁹ It seeks to involve the Muslim community in the process of national development set forth by the new regime. Fachry and Bahtiar denounce the critics of this thought like Kamal Hassan. They view that those critics have failed to construe the spirit of 'historicism and empiricism' contained in this thought.¹⁰ While Kamal Hassan's book is confined to the period of 1966-197, Fachry's and Bahtiar's *Merambah Jalan Baru Islam* covers the development of Islamic thought till the first half of the 1980s. The book observes that in the 1980s the trend of new intellectualism developed into four mainstreams of Islamic thought namely: neo-modernism (Nurcholish and Abdurrahman Wahid), universalism (Amien Rais and Djohan Effendy), democracy and socialism (Adi Sasono and Dawam Rahardjo), and (conventional) modernism (Syafi'i Ma'arif). Probably it is the first book that labels Nurcholish's and Abdurrahman's intellectualism as neo-modernism.

⁹New Order (*Orde Baru*) is a term given to the period of Soeharto governance. It started exactly when Soeharto took over the power from Soekarno following the failure of 30th September *coup* by Communist party and ended when Soeharto stepped down in May 1998.

¹⁰Fachry Ali and Bahtiar Effendy, *Merambah Jalan Baru Islam*, 123.

By neo-modernism, they mean a pattern of Islamic thought which seeks to synthesize Islamic classical scholarship and western intellectualism. Although such a label does reveal the substantial contents of Nurcholish's and Abdurrahman's thought, the term still poses some problems. This term can perpetuate dichotomy in Islamic thought. Besides, such a term also fails to make itself different from Islamic modernism. If we look into ideas exposed by Nurcholish and Abdurrahman, there has been nothing new. What they do so far is either repeating or elaborating what the modernist Muslims have said. Probably it is due to the absent of this striking feature, some writers have come to label Nurcholish's and Abdurrahman's thought with varying attributes. Moeslim Abdurrahman considers them as Muslim modernists,¹¹ while Sirajuddin Syamsuddin describes them as substantialists,¹² and Azyumardi Azra calls Nurcholish as neo-traditionalist.¹³

Barton similarly poses objection to Kamal Hassan. In his *Gagasan Islam Liberal di Indonesia: Pemikiran Neo-Modernisme Nurcholish Madjid, Djohan Effendi, Ahmad Wahib and Abdurrahman Wahid*,¹⁴ Barton argues that Kamal Hassan's analysis is very much influenced by his personal bias. Barton sees that Kamal Hassan has inappropriately applied a (modern Muslim) reformist outlook in assessing the thought of the renewal group. This is especially discernible in three different places.

¹¹Moeslim Abdurrahman, "Bagaimana Indonesia dibaca Pemikir Islam: Sebuah Resensi Pemikiran", in Muntaha Azhari and Abdul Mun'im Saleh (eds.), *Islam Indonesia Menatap Masa Depan* (Jakarta: Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat (P3M), 1989), 215-226.

¹²Din Syamsuddin, "Islamic Political Thought and Cultural Revival in Modern Indonesia", *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies*, Vol.2 (4), 1995, 59-61.

¹³Azyumardi Azra, "Cak Nur: Neo-Modernis atau Neo-Tradisionalis?" <http://www.paramadina>, July 28, 1998, 1-6.

¹⁴This book is adopted from his Ph.D dissertation submitted to Monash University under the title *The Emergence of Neo-Modernism: A Progressive, Liberal Movement of Islamic Thought in Indonesia: A Textual Study Examining the Writings of Nurcholish Madjid, Djohan Effendi, Ahmad Wahib and Abdurrahman Wahid*. The book was translated into Bahasa Indonesia by Nanang Tahqiq under the title *Gagasan Islam Liberal di Indonesia, Pemikiran Neo-Modernisme Nurcholish Madjid, Djohan Effendi, Ahmad Wahib, and Abdurrahman Wahid* (Jakarta: jointly published by Paramadina, Pustaka Antara, Yayasan Adikarya and The Ford Foundation, 1999).

First, Barton values that it is misleading to view Nurcholish's thought as accommodative similar to that of Mintaredja (an accommodative politician) because not all Nurcholish's thought can be categorized "accommodative". He reasons that, "this new movement of thought represents a genuine attempt to combine progressive liberal ideals with deep religious faith".¹⁵ To him the "*pembaruan pemikiran Islam*, Indonesian Islamic neo-modernism, is just not an opportunistic reaction to a changed political reality".¹⁶ Far from being politically motivated, Barton discerns it as "essentially religious in nature and is motivated primarily by concern for the progressive development of Islam and the Islamic community".¹⁷ Barton thus regards Kamal Hassan as uncritical. Secondly, Barton refutes Kamal Hassan's claim that Nurcholish has undergone a radical change in the 1970s. In Barton's eyes, Nurcholish's liberal thought does not happen overnight but has been in place prior to his trip to the United States of America. He points to Nurcholish's article *Modernization is rationalization* as evidence. Thirdly, Barton rejects Kamal Hassan's critique that asserts Nurcholish's thought is full of *bid'ah*. He views that these last two points reflect Kamal Hassan's *a priori* attitude towards the renewal group.¹⁸ Like Fachry and Bahtiar, Barton also uses the term 'neo-modernism' to explain Nurcholish's and Abdurrahman's thought. He says that "the term neo-modernism, although not entirely ideal, provides a means of delineating this intellectual movement and distinguishing it from traditionalism and modernism whilst also alluding to origins in the ideas of the earlier modernist movement".¹⁹

¹⁵Greg Barton, "Neo-Modernism: A vital Syntheses of Traditionalist and Modernist Islamic Thought in Indonesia", *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies*, Vol.2 (3), 1995, 5.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁸Greg Barton, *Gagasan Islam Liberal di Indonesia*, 29-32.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 6-7.

Barton's book *Gagasan Islam Liberal di Indonesia* is undeniably very valuable. It gives detailed historical background to the emergence of the Renewal of Islamic Thought Movement. It well presents the thought of such leading figures of neo-modernist school as Nurcholish, Djohan Effendy, Ahmad Wahib, and Abdurrahman Wahid. The book mainly concentrates on their early works stretching from the end of 1960s to the early 1980s. Unfortunately, it fails to provide a critical account. The book is more descriptive and appreciative. Most of the ideas found in this book have been reproduced in some of his other publications important of which are *Neo-Modernism: A Vital Synthesis of Traditionalist and Modernist Islamic Thought in Indonesia*,²⁰ *Indonesia's Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid as Intellectual 'Ulamā': The Meeting of Islamic Traditionalism and Modernism in neo-Modernist thought*,²¹ *The International Context of the Emergence of Islamic Neo-Modernism in Indonesia*,²² and *The Liberal, Progressive Roots of Abdurrahman's Thought*.²³

In the article *ijtihad and Innovation in Neo-Modernist Islamic Thought in Indonesia*²⁴, Saeed Abdullah highlights some examples of Nurcholish's and Abdurrahman's *ijtihad*. According to him, their *ijtihad* is belonged to a context-based model *ijtihad* whose salient feature lies in its emphasis on the peculiarity of local culture in interpreting the *Qur'ānic verses* and the sayings of the Prophet. In relation

²⁰Greg Barton, "Neo-Modernism", 1-73.

²¹Greg Barton, "Indonesia's Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid as Intellectual 'Ulamā; the Meeting of Islamic Traditionalism and Modernism in Neo-Modernist Thought", *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies*, Vol.4 (1), 1997, 29-80.

²²Greg Barton, "The International Context of the Emergence of Islamic Neo-Modernism in Indonesia", in M.C. Ricklefs (ed.), *Islam in the Indonesian Social Context* (Victoria: CSAS Monash University, 1991), 69-82.

²³Greg Barton, "The Liberal, Progressive Roots of Abdurrahman's Thought", in Greg Barton and Greg Fealey (eds.), *Nahdlatul 'Ulamā: Traditional Islam and Modernity in Indonesia* (Clayton: Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, 1996), 190-226.

²⁴Abdullah Saeed, "Ijtihad and Innovation in Neo-Modernist Islamic Thought in Indonesia", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relation*, Vol.8 (3), 1997, 279-295.