



## Populer Exegesis: Covid-19 Pandemic Theology In Gus Baha's View

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of writing this article is to discuss the theology of the Covid-19 pandemic in Gus Baha's view and to provide knowledge to the public about attitudes in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic according to the Qur'an. This research is a qualitative library research with a theological approach. From this research, it is known that Gus Baha', a moderate contemporary cleric, views the Covid-19 pandemic as a means for humans to become grateful servants. This is because humans as Gods creatures have the potential to be damaged as well as the earth we live in. With the grace of Allah SWT, the earth with all its potential damage, can become a place suitable for habitation by every living creature. The Covid-19 outbreak is much lighter than the actual potential damage to the earth. This is the importance of humans to always be grateful to Allah even though they are hit by a pandemic which also causes economics problems to social problems because Allah will definitely test his servants so that Muslims have a steadfast heart and strong mentality (Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 155). This pandemic is also a reminder for humans not to be arrogant and realize that they are weak creatures (QS. Al- An'am [6]: 162) but that does not mean surrender to the situation and conditions. The pandemic should be seen as a means to increase faith by being a grateful servant an social.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Populer Qur'anic Interpretation, Covid-19 Pandemic, Theology, Gus Baha'*

### INTRODUCTION

In December 2019 an outbreak of COVID-19 (Corona Virus Disease 2019) broke out in Wuhan and feasible to WHO (World Health Organization) on December 31, 2019. WHO declared it a global pandemic on March 2, 2020 (Hidayah, 2020). COVID-19 is a disease outbreak that is threatening almost the entire world's population. This outbreak has threatened more than 212 countries since it first appeared in China by the end

of 2019. Great countries such as America, Italy, Belgium, until Spain also did not escape the Covid Card-19. Covid-19 is very difficult to overcome because of the very fast transmission process (Muhaimin, 2020). Even according to the data of Johns Hopkins University total Corona virus infection worldwide on 12 August 2021 has reached 204,735,347 cases. As quoted from [gisanddata.maps.arcgis.com](https://gisanddata.maps.arcgis.com), on that date it also recorded 4,324,587 people in the world died of Covid-19 (Liputan6.com: 2021).

The massive transmission and spread of COVID-19 has had an impact on various aspects, such as political, educational, including economic aspects. In India, famine hit thousands of people because of the famine crisis as a result of the lockdown policy. Even in Indonesia, the National Statistics Agency (BPS) reported that the poverty rate in Indonesia had increased by 9.78% as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. WHO, which is the highest health organization in the world, appealed to countries in the world to be firm and responsive in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic (Muhaimin, 2020). From the WHO's appeal, an extra approach is taken by countries in the world. One of them is the implementation of social-physical distancing. Through this regulation, [16.25, 28/8/2021] Fathatul Falah: the community's space for movement is limited to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. Many countries have isolated their territories and even closed various agencies as an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (Sabara, 2020).

The world order is slowly starting to change as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Learning via online, prioritizes hygiene, travel restrictions between regions and countries, and even restrictions on worship in places of worship such as mosques and churches. Restrictions on religious activities are carried out in various countries such as Iran, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Previously, Saudi Arabia had stopped the Umrah and Hajj pilgrimages at the Grand Mosque. The papal vatican page is also temporarily closed (Toresano, 2020). The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) has also appealed to the public through fatwa Number 14 of 2020 which contains appeals for worship procedures and moral recommendations such as maintaining distance, taking care of funerals for victims of COVID-19, not holding congregational prayers in mosques, suspending Friday prayers, prohibiting the hoarding of goods during an emergency, and inviting the public to comply with government regulations (Sohrah, 2021).

In this case, there is a role of religion that cannot be replaced by any party. From a socioanthropological point of view, for example, as Dunlop said, it is religion that can help humans when other agencies fail to help. So the ulama' or clergy have an important role to present religion correctly in the midst of the complex problems of society, especially during this COVID-19 pandemic (Zahrattunnisa, 2020). One of the clerics or scholars who are currently so loved by the community is KH. Bahauddin Nur Salim or who is often called Gus Baha'. Gus Baha' is a commentator and expert in Fiqh who has no doubt about his knowledge (Hakamah, 2019). Along with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Gus Baha' became one of the religious leaders who aggressively urged the public to always be responsive to the dangers of the corona virus. In addition, he is also able to be present as a cooler in the midst of the aridity of society due to this pandemic.

By looking at the complexity of the current COVID-19 pandemic problem and the breadth of Gus Baha' knowledge, it is very appropriate and very interesting to know the theology of the COVID-19 pandemic in Gus Baha's view and the attitude that society should have in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic according to Gus Baha's view. Al-Qur'an. This research is a qualitative type of library research with a theological approach. Primary data was obtained from Gus Baha' video lecture about the COVID-19 pandemic on the Gayeng and Kalong Santri Youtube channels. In addition, other literatures such as books, journals, and other scientific works related to this research will also be used as secondary data.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Covid-19 Pandemic**

A pandemic is the spread of disease on a large scale, long term, and affects society on a global scale. Apart from the spread and the large number of victims, the pandemic is also dangerous because it is contagious (Maulana, 2020). Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The disease was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, the capital of China's Hubei province, and has since spread globally until now. Common symptoms experienced by sufferers of this virus are fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Other symptoms are muscle pain, phlegm production,

diarrhea, sore throat, loss of smell, and abdominal pain. Most cases result in mild symptoms, but in some cases it progresses to viral pneumonia and multi-organ failure. The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the status of a global COVID-19 pandemic after the virus has spread to most areas of the world. The number of infected continues to grow but has not found a truly effective drug for this virus. Large crowds have been prevented to avoid transmission such as schools, campuses, conferences, entertainment venues, including worship activities such as Umrah, Hajj, and Friday prayers (Ni'am, 2020).

The rapid spread of COVID-19 has had a considerable influence on various aspects. The government has made various efforts to suppress the spread of the COVID-19 virus with various policies, ranging from Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) to Community Activity Restrictions (PPKM) policies. Initially this PPKM was only valid until July 20, 2021, but eventually it continued to be extended because it was considered effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19. In fact, the decline in Indonesia's economic growth rate in the first and second quarters of COVID-19 was worse than the 1997 crisis. The government's focus on economic recovery is considered quite good. These efforts helped the fall of the Indonesian economy to grow again. The government allocates funds for the empowerment of MSMEs in 2020 amounting to 123.46 trillion of the total social assistance budget which reaches 695 trillion (Ilyas, 2021).

Since 2000, there have been three pandemics namely severe acute respiratory syndrome or SARS in 2003, H1N1 or also known as swine flu in 2009, and COVID-19. The second generation of the SARS virus really made the world's conditions change dramatically. Social distancing, lockdowns, travel restrictions, and a number of other public policies have been implemented by countries infected with COVID-19. This pandemic really caused a great depression in various countries, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) stated that the lockdown policy in many countries could be seen as a major lockdown, identified as similar to the depression that occurred during the World War II period (Kusno, 2020).

## **Gus Baha's Profile**

Gus Baha 'became one of the most popular scholars among the public. His full name is KH. Ahmad Baha'uddin Nur Salim. He was born on March 15, 1977 in Narukan Village, Kragan District, Rembang Regency, Central Java. Gus Baha is the son of an expert scholar of the Qur'an, KH. Nur Salim who is a student of KH. Arwani, Kudus and KH. Abdullah Salam from Pati, Central Java (Fathurrosyid, 2020). His mother's name is Hj. Yuchanidz Nur Salim who is a descendant of a large family of Ulama Lasem. As a child, Gus Baha' studied and memorized the Qur'an and its Qira'ah from his father. So that at a very young age, he has been able to complete the memorization of the Qur'an and its Qira'ah. As a teenager, Gus Baha' continued his education at the Al-Anwar Sarang Islamic boarding school, under the tutelage of KH. Maimoen Zubair. This is where Gus Baha' studied and served, so that he was able to master the fields of Shari'a science such as fiqh, hadith, and Tafsir (Hakamah, 2019).

In addition, Gus Baha' has also completed memorizing Arabic grammar books such as Alfiyah Ibn Malik and 'Imriti. Not enough there, in this cottage too, Gus Baha 'is able to memorize the book of Fathul Mu'in and the book of Sahih Bukhari and the book of Sahih Muslim along with the sanad and narrations. Gus Baha' was able to show his intellectual prowess among the students. Although the appearance is very simple but the depth of knowledge can not be doubted. His scientific lineage is continued to the great scholars, so that his knowledge can be accounted for. Gus Baha' figure can be empirical evidence that the depth of knowledge can go beyond academic degrees. Gus Baha's diligence in seeking knowledge made him achieve many achievements, until he received the mandate to become Chairman of the Fat al-Mu'in Book Study Forum and Chairman of Ma'arif in the management of the Al-Anwar Islamic boarding school.

Gus Baha' is also known as a santri who has an emotional closeness to his kianya. The proof is that Gus Baha' often accompanied KH. Maimoen Zubair on various occasions. Starting from just talking casually, until when KH. Maimoen Zubair had guests or received visits from great scholars who came to Al-Anwar Islamic Boarding School. After studying at al-Anwar, Gus Baha' married the daughter of the Sidogiri Islamic Boarding School family's daughter, Shofiyah. A few years later, Gus Baha' left his hometown

and rented a house in Yogyakarta. However, when his father died in 2005, Gus Baha' returned to Kragan. Gus Baha' is currently also actively devoting himself to the Institute for Al-Qur'an Interpretation at the Indonesian Islamic University (UII) Yogyakarta. There, he became the Head of the UII Lajnah Mushaf Team.

Gus Baha' is also a member of the National Tafsir Council whose members consist of commentators from all over Indonesia, such as Professor Dr. M. Quruish Shihab, Professor Shohib, Professor Zaini Dahlan, and many others. Very proud because there Gus Baha' is the only member who does not have a formal education degree. Then on August 29, 2019 Gus Baha' was appointed as Rois Syuriah PBNU (Big Board of Nahdlatul Ulama). The capability and credibility of Gus Baha' in the field of al-Qur'an and Tafsir scholarship is appreciated by his colleagues and colleagues (Fathurrosyid, 2020). Even Professor Quraish Shihab once revealed that it is difficult to find people who really understand and memorize the details of the Koran to the details of fiqh implied in the verses of the Koran like Gus Baha' (Rifa'i, 2021).

Gus Baha' recitations held at Islamic boarding schools, public recitations, graduation ceremonies, and regular recitations became viral after the results of the picture and sound were uploaded to several social media and Youtube. The picture or audio is taken by a formal institution or individual who is a lover of Gus Baha' (Fathurrosyid, 2020). From here, the lovers of Gus Baha' increasingly spread throughout the archipelago and even abroad. Through his connoisseurs, Gus Baha' thoughts are increasingly popular in the community. Even so, Gus Baha' is not someone who is lulled by popularity. Even today, he does not have a personal social media account (Azyumardi Azra, 2020). Gus Baha' became a charismatic cleric who was known for his knowledge and simplicity. In his lectures, he often uses informal language and a mixture of Javanese, giving a relaxed impression. His lectures were light, relaxed, and humorous but with weight, making it easy for the audience to understand his lectures (Syaifuddin, 2020).

### **The Theology of the COVID-19 Pandemic According to Gus Baha'**

Psychologically, religion has become a force in humans that drives all their activities. Even sociologically, religion has become the highest value in

organizing and integrating humans. Religion with the value of sacredness in it cannot be dammed by any force and any conditions in this world, religion will continue to manifest as the highest value of human beings. This situation is because from a theological point of view, religion is seen as human nature. azyumardi Azra sees that religion exists based on human needs, at least from the aspect of human emotionality. In his work entitled Systematic Theology, Louis Berkhop asserts that the idea of God is practically universal in every human race, both in nations and tribes that do not have civilization. Berkhop also mentions that among all people and tribes in the world there is a feeling of God, which can be seen from the way of worship.

When this virus just spread in China, the public was fussed over the opinion of a cleric who said that the corona virus was an army of Allah sent to China for oppressing Uighur Muslims. It becomes a big question when the virus finally spreads to the Muslim community and finally causes the cessation of Umrah, Hajj and other worship activities that involve large crowds. Such a judgmental view of others is the mindset of some Muslims. Previously, there was a case of a da'i who accused the affected area of being an area affected by Allah's curse, such as the disasters that occurred in Lombok, Palu, Banten, and so on. Then, citing verses from the Qur'an or Hadith as justification for his opinion that judges the victims of the disaster. They do not think what if the disaster befell them or their families. When COVID-19 also spreads in Muslim areas, those who like to judge disaster victims are silent. This case should be a lesson not to easily judge others, especially by bringing verses from the Qur'an and hadith. (Supriyatna, 2020).

As a result of the differences in understanding contained in the flow of Islamic theology regarding the power of reason, the function of revelation, and the freedom and power of humans over their will and actions, there are also differences in understanding about the absolute power and will of Allah SWT. In al-Ibanah, al-Ash'ari argues that God is not subject to anyone, there is no substance that can make laws and determine what God may make. Allah SWT is absolute in his will and power (Nasution, 2016). People easily believe in hoaxes because of their narrow mindset, all of that also happens because of their lack of knowledge, so they cannot distinguish between fake news and true news. Whereas in Islam, seeking knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim (Supriyatna, 2020).

Gus Baha' who is one of the moderate contemporary scholars, views the COVID-19 pandemic as a means for humans to become grateful servants. This is because humans as God's creatures have the potential to be damaged, as well as the earth we live in. With the grace of Allah SWT, the earth with all its potential damage, can become a place suitable for habitation by every living creature. The existence of this COVID-19 outbreak is much lighter than the actual potential damage to the earth. In the sky, there are meteors that have the potential to fall without us knowing the time, beneath the earth there are magma and mines that have the potential to landslide. So that this earth has the potential for a disaster that is more devastating than we think, as the word of God in QS. al-An'am [6]: 65.

Allah introduces himself as a substance that can bring punishment from above us, as with the fall of meteors and other celestial bodies. The doom can also come from below us, as we know the earth is liquefied, every time there is a potential for magma to come out of the bowels of the earth. doom can also come from our differences as social beings. These differences are like differences in madhhab, politics, thoughts. From these many differences, there is the potential for discord. In general, all of this has happened, so that every time he reads this verse the Prophet Muhammad always says "what we experience is lighter and better". This is where it is important for us as faithful servants to always be grateful to Allah even though we are being hit by a pandemic which also causes economic problems to social problems. One of the advices of our ancestors is that the best worship is to always hope. So let us always believe that there will always be a solution and a way. This religion is intended for servants who always hope in their Lord.

In the past when the Quraysh disbelievers did not believe in the Prophet Muhammad and tortured the Prophet Muhammad, the guardian angel of the mountain wanted to bring down the mountain as punishment for the Quraish infidels, but the Prophet Muhammad still hoped that if they did not believe, maybe someday his descendants would become a man. servant who believes in Allah. Like Abu Jahal, who had a son, Ikrimah, and Abu Lahab, who had a son named Durrah, and all of them became believers. From our gratitude to Allah, we hope that Allah will add mercy to us. With this pandemic, we must not give up hope that life is full of problems, thus



making us complain and be ungrateful. In a Hadith Qudsi, Allah says "Indeed I am Allah, there is no god but Me, whoever is not patient with My trials, is not grateful for all My favors and is not happy with My decisions, then let him come out from under the heavens." earth) and seek God besides Me."

After being grateful for the blessings of faith, Islam, and health, we should continue to pray. Although the prayer has not been answered, it is certainly true. Because praying is a form of our servitude to God. It is important to always remember, that the potential for greater disasters is always there, in QS. Al-Mulk [67]: 16-17. In addition, in QS. Al-Mulk [67]: 30, Allah reminds humans that the water we always use is a gift from Allah. If the earth system is shifted just a little, then the water source will dry up. This pandemic is also a reminder for humans not to be arrogant, humans should realize that they are weak creatures. That humans who only have one life can lose to a creature as small as a virus. But behind the feeling of weakness, you should not feel that this life is not enjoyable. Humans can count the disease called COVID-19, but humans will not be able to count the blessings given by God, such as the blessings of breathing, living, and having a good social system. This is as confirmed by Allah in QS. An-Nahl [16]:18.

In QS. Fathir [35]:41, Allah says that this natural system is so great, Allah is holding back the heavens and the earth from disappearing. However, that does not mean that humans can only surrender to situations and conditions. On the other hand, in the face of this pandemic, trust in Allah is an absolute for a servant. Remembering death should make people more enthusiastic in living life. Because life in this world is a provision for life in the hereafter. The pandemic should be seen as a means to increase faith by being grateful and social-minded servants. All Indonesian citizens have a responsibility to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, this pandemic is not only the responsibility of officials. In Islam, anyone who has the ability to help, it is obligatory to help. The attitude of caring for each other led this nation to achieve independence (Santri Kalong, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

In recent years, COVID-19 has become the most terrible pandemic for the entire population of the world. COVID-19 attacks almost all aspects of life. Various views on COVID-19 have also emerged, some people think COVID-19 is not real, some panic too much to face COVID-19, but there are some people who are still aware of the dangers of COVID-19 but don't panic too much. Experts from various fields have also issued their opinions regarding this pandemic, including from clergy. Gus Baha' became one of the scholars who calmed the panic of the people. His presence is like a spring in the middle of the arid desert. Gus Baha' views the COVID-19 pandemic as a means for humans to become grateful servants. Be grateful for all the blessings that have been given by Allah, and don't just focus on the test of this COVID-19 pandemic. The existence of this pandemic reminds humans not to be arrogant creatures, humans who claim to be strong have actually lost to creatures as small as viruses. The COVID-19 pandemic can be a means for humans to grow concern for others. Because with the care of others, surely the pandemic will feel lighter to go through. All Indonesian citizens have a responsibility to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.

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