



Nurcholish Majid's Inclusive Interpretation Pattern in Understanding Religious Tolerance Verses

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Abstract : *Inclusive theology manifests itself in religious plurality, particularly in Indonesia, a pluralistic country with many diverse races, ethnicities, and religions. Islam, through its holy text Al-Qur'an, instructs its people to appreciate one another and forbids religious disputes. This paper attempts to reinterpret the verses of religious tolerance by combining the theme interpretation method and content analysis with an inclusive theological approach to address the challenge of interpreting the verses of tolerance. This paper leads to an understanding that a pluralist mindset is required in building inter-religious interactions in Indonesia by embracing the reality of other religions while maintaining one's Muslim identity.*

Keywords: *Inclusive Interpretation; Plurality; Tolerance*

Abstract : *Teologi Inklusif muncul pada pluralitas dalam beragama, khususnya di Indonesia yang merupakan sebuah negara plural dengan banyaknya ragam ras, suku dan agama. Islam dengan kitab sucinya Al-Qur'an mengajarkan kepada umatnya untuk saling menghormati dan melarang saling bertikai antar pemeluk agama. Melalui tafsir inklusif yang dikembangkan oleh Cak Nur, tulisan ini mencoba menginterpretasikan kembali ayat-ayat toleransi beragama dengan menggunakan metode tafsir tematik dan content analysis dengan pendekatan teologi inklusif untuk*

mengupas persoalan pemahaman ayat-ayat toleransi. Sehingga menghasilkan sebuah pemahaman bahwa sikap pluralis diperlukan dalam membina hubungan antar umat agama di Indonesia dengan mengakui kebenaran agama lain tanpa menghilangkan identitas sebagai seorang muslim.

Kata kunci: *Pluralitas; Tafsir Inklusif; Toleransi.*

A. Introduction

Human life is marked by the diversity of nations, ethnicities, religions, and civilizations. This diversity is undeniably a tool of existence. However, in this diversity, there are moments when intersections occur that result in "conflict" amongst various strata of society. Conflicts and wars between tribes or nations have occurred throughout history, some of which have been precipitated by the issue of diversity. Some people see diversity as a disparity, but some see it as a challenge. In this setting, it is obvious that the Indonesian people are ethnically, culturally, and linguistically varied, not to mention the various religions and beliefs represented. This, of course, will make life more exciting.

As a result, this diversity must be treated with proportion because there are frequent causes of conflict amongst individuals in our beloved motherland, typically under the guise of diversity, particularly religion. Islam, the majority religion practiced by the Indonesian people, is frequently blamed. So, how does Islam as a faith freely embrace differences? Is there anything that can bring this country's religions together, so that religious people do not have to fight each other? Cak Nur's study of the inclusive interpretation approach in understanding the verses of tolerance provided answers to the questions.

This study attempts to answer the above concerns with an inclusive theology approach that departs from the interpretation of the holy verses of the Qur'an in addressing plurality by employing the thematic interpretation method and content analysis. All of the revealed Holy Books (Injil, Torah, Zabur, and Al-Qur'an) are a revelation from God. One is related to the message of piety (Surah 4:131). Cak Nur's emphasis on interpreting God's message is central

to his formulation of inclusive theology.¹ By referring to Muhammad Asad, *taqwa* should be defined as 'God consciousness,' rather than a traditional connotation such as obedience to God's presence.² Specifically, the awareness that God is ubiquitous (omnipresent) in our daily lives, which Hasan Hanafi refers to as '*al-wa'yu al-zatiy*' (Self-Awareness).³

Ma'mun Mu'min discovered that inclusivity of interpretation is required to neutralize all forms of exclusively textualist interpretations that can harm the harmony of a pluralist life in his writings titled "Method of Inclusive Interpretation: Efforts to Dissect the Exclusivity of Al-Qur'an Interpretation."⁴ Similarly, Saifullah underlined that a similar pattern of inclusive interpretation could be found in M. Abduh's *Tafsir al-Mannar*, particularly in explaining the verses on inter-religious interactions.⁵ This is in contrast to what Maria Ulfa said under the theme "Observing the Religious Inclusivism of Nurcholish Madjid," which stated that Cak Nur's religious inclusivism is not suited for use in Islam.⁶ Conversely, in this study, the emphasis is on studying Qur'anic verses on religious tolerance utilizing Nurcholish Majid's inclusive theory, which is considerably different from the other two studies.

¹ "And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth, and indeed We have commanded those who were given the Book before you and (also) to you; fear Allah. but if you disbelieve, then (know) verily what is in the heavens and what is in the earth belongs to Allah alone, and Allah is Rich and Praiseworthy." Meaning: your disbelief will not bring any harm to Allah because Allah has no will for you. *Qur'an Dan Terjemah* (Jakarta: Kemenag RI, 2002).

² See, Sukidi, *Teologi Inklusif Cak Nur, in the Author's Introduction* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2021), p. vi-vii.

³ See, Hasan Hanafi, *Min al-Aqidah Ila Tsaurah, Qism al-Tauhid* (Kairo: Hasan Hanafi, 1999). At the beginning, Hanafi review that the presence of God as '*al-wa'yu al-zatiy*' in humans

⁴ Makmun Mu'min, "Metode Tafsir Inklusif: Upaya Membedah Eksklusivitas Interpretasi Al-Qur'an," *Hermeneutik: Jurnal Ilmu al-Qur'an dan Tafsir*, Vol. 8, no. 1 (2014).

⁵ Saifullah, "Inklusifisme Tafsir Al-Mannar," *Dialogia: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Sosial*, Vol. 6, no. 2 (2008).

⁶ Maria Ulfa, "Mencermati Inklusivisme Agama Nurcholish Madjid," *Kalimah: Jurnal Studi Agama dan Pemikiran Islam*, Vol. 11, no. 2 (2013): p. 249.

B. Nurcholish Majid and Theories of Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Pluralism

Nurcholish Majid⁷ was born on March 17, 1939, in Jombang, to a NU pesantren family but was associated with the modernist political party Masyumi. His education began at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Mojoanyar Jombang. His secondary education was completed in Darul Ulum, Rejoso Jombang, one of East Java's most famous *salaf* (traditional) Islamic boarding schools (*Pondok*). Nurcholish, despite his Masyumi political leaning, did not feel at ease studying at a pesantren with NU political affiliation. As a result, he decided to relocate to Pondok Modern Gontor, Ponorogo. In this location, he learned the fundamentals of the Islamic religion, particularly Arabic and English. As a result, his time at Gontor significantly impacted his personality. This claim is evidenced in his description of Gontor: "Gontor was undoubtedly a modern Islamic boarding school. It was rather modern for its size at the time." Its many activities, systems, attitudes, and educational and teaching approaches make it so. The material it teaches reflects its modernism. In summary, Gontor was an enclave cut off from the rest of the world. As a result, a Madiun priest was taken aback when he arrived. Gontor, he claims, is already a "*pondok* modern (modern Islamic boarding school)." This priest is responsible for the term "*pondok* modern."⁸ He subsequently went on to the Faculty of Adab IAIN Syahid in Jakarta (1968) and then to the University of Chicago (1978-1984), where he got his Ph.D. in Islamic Philosophy with a dissertation on philosophy and kalam (theology) according to Ibn Taymiyah. Cak Nur passed in 2006 after years of suffering from chronic liver illness, which required him to undergo unsuccessful liver transplant surgery.

His works are widely distributed and published, including *Islam, Modernity, and Indonesianness* (1987), *Islam: Doctrine and Civilization* (1992), *Islamic Democracy and Indonesianness* (1993),

⁷ This biography of Cak Nur was extracted from the review of Budhy Munawar-Rachman, *Islam and Nurcholish Majid's Pluralism* (Jakarta: Universitas Para Madina, 2007).

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 2-3.

Contextualization of Islamic Doctrine in History (1994), Islam Religion of Civilization (1995), Islam the Religion of Humanity (1995), Open Dialogue (1997), The Skyline of Islamic Civilization (1997), From Islamic Boarding Schools (1997), Religious Journeys for Umrah and Haj (1997). Not to mention his independent writings, which have appeared in national and international print media.

He then attempted to follow Alan Race's⁹ concepts on tripolar typology, notably exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism, through his many writings. Many scientists disagree with this hypothesis, particularly when it is applied to the text of the Qur'an.

Exclusivism departs from the core premise that only one religion is true and provides the best way of life. Other religions are viewed as false and deceptive in and of themselves. This statement is based on a unique logic based on the assumption that if a human civilization responds to the universal need for truth, then anything that contradicts civilization and universal truth is inherently bad.

In contrast to exclusivism, inclusivism believes that truth and the power of salvation exist in particular faiths while also believing that truth exists in other religions. In other words, the conviction in the truth of one's religion is firmly held while openly acknowledging that other religious traditions also give the truth.

Pluralism, the third category, opposes both exclusivism and inclusivism. Pluralism elevates religions to the same level, each with its distinct value proposition. That is, every religion claims the truth on its terms. As a result, this concept assumes that each religion has its role as a way of life, and any attempt to judge or consider the idea of the truth of other religions with the size and measure of one's religion is wrong.¹⁰

⁹ Alan Race is a theologian of the Anglican Church who is renowned for studying religious theology. He writes in theology and interfaith dialogue and is Chief Editor of the international journals 'Interreligious Insight: A Journal of Theology and Engagement'. See Ian Markham, "'Christianity and Other Religion.' In The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology. Gareth Jones (Ed.)" (Malden: MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

¹⁰ Imam Hanafi, "Eksklusivisme, Inklusivisme, dan Pluralisme: Membaca Pola Keberagamaan Umat Beriman," *Al-Fikra: Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman*, Vol. 10, no. 2 (2011): p. 392-397.

C. Understanding of God, Man, and Religion

1. Understanding the One God

The primary belief is that Allah Almighty has set idioms, methods, techniques, and routes for each group of humans. It is not allowed for humans to blame each other and impose their will on one another to follow their idioms, methods, techniques, and routes. Humans, on the other hand, should leave their separate roles and compete to do a lot of good; as Allah states:

“And unto thee [O Prophet] have We vouchsafed this divine writ, setting forth the truth, confirming the truth of whatever there still remains of earlier revelations and determining what is true therein. Judge, then, between the followers of earlier revelation in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high, and do not follow their errant views, forsaking the truth that has come unto thee. Unto every one of you have We appointed a [different] law and way of life. And if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but [He willed it otherwise] in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed unto, you. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works! Unto God you all must return; and then He will make you truly understand all that on which you were wont to differ”. (Al-Maidah: 48)

Cak Nur defines this as teaching on relationships and associations based on the belief that every religion, in its unique manner, strives to reach the truth. As a result, followers of these religions are expected to comprehend and carry out their religious orders without feeling distracted, threatened, or guilty. As a result, an attitude of diversity inclusive of every individual religious community is an urgent requirement that must be pursued consistently to be realized successfully in this plural republic.

Although there are numerous ways, methods, or roads to God, the God to be addressed is the same, God Almighty. God, to whom all hands reach out in search of His protection. That is, without exception, the God of all mankind. Cak Nur's sentiment is similar to that of Abul Kamal Azad, who coined the phrase "al-Din wahid wa

al-syari'at mukhtalifah" (no difference in *Din*, only in *Syar'a*), implying that religion remains the same regardless of Shari'ah.¹¹ The lesson is that we must trust in God Almighty and act following our faith. God's commandments are the same in every era and are communicated to humanity in the same way in every setting. This is what religion has to offer humans throughout the years and under all conditions.¹²

He appears to be embracing Perennial Philosophy, similar to Sayyed Husein Naser, whose premise is that all religions have the same truth. It's only that one of them is a persona that forcefully advocates modernity, while the other frequently voices traditionalism.

2. Understanding the One Humanity

Cak Nur emphasized that plurality, as revealed in the Qur'an, is a reality that has become God's will, as stated in the Qur'an:

"O men! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female and have made you into nations and tribes so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him. Behold, God is all-knowing, all-aware (Q.S. al-Hujurat: 13).

According to him, this verse affirms humanity's unity, and Islam must be seen as an open religion.

Islam is an open religion because it rejects exclusivity and absolutism and highly values pluralism. According to him, Muslims, as the majority group in Indonesia, must also be open, capable of displaying self-confidence, and acting as civil servants who can guide other communities. Meanwhile, the rejection of absolutism suggests that Islam prioritizes the concept of growth and development, specifically the dynamic movement ethos in Islamic teachings.

According to Cak Nur in the Medina charter, the Prophet Muhammad [PBUH] had shown his people about one humanity, not differentiating between rights and obligations in society and the state.

¹¹ See Abdul Kamal Azad, *The Tarjuman Al-Qur'an*, vol. I (Hyderabad: Dr. Syed Abdullatif's Trust for Quranic & the Cultural Studies, 1981), p. 153-160.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 153-160.

This is demonstrated by the usage of the word "ummah" in the Medina charter for all Medina people, despite the fact that the people of Medina were not just Muslims but also Jews. He believed that this document introduced humanity, among other things, to the perspective of freedom, particularly in religious and economic fields, as well as social and political responsibility, particularly collective defense.¹³ This discussion is made clear in the Qur'an:

“Those who have been driven from their homelands against all right for no other reason than their saying. "Our Sustainer is God!" For, if God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, all] monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosques - in [all of] which God's name is abundantly extolled - would surely have been destroyed [ere now]. And God will most certainly succor him who succors His cause: for, verily, God is most powerful, almighty (Al-Hajj: 40).

He claims the Prophet spent ten years in Medina constructing a civilized civilization. Muslims can draw inspiration for modern-day issues from the Prophet's experience during this classical period.

3. Understanding the One Religion

According to Nurcholish's vision, Islam justifies every religious believer's attitude of taking his religious teachings seriously, following the prophets' teachings. God verifies:

“Verily, it is We who bestowed from on high the Torah, wherein there was guidance and light. On `its strength did the prophets, who had surrendered themselves unto God, deliver judgment unto those who followed the Jewish faith; and so did the [early] men of God and the rabbis, inasmuch as some of God's writ had been entrusted to their care; and they [all] bore witness to its truth” (Al-Maidah: 44).

According to this verse, even a Jew who observes his religion correctly according to the teachings of the submitted prophets is considered a surrendered person (Muslim). Jews, on the other hand,

¹³ Munawar-Rachman, *Islam and Nurcholish Majid's Pluralism*, p. 138.

who do not exercise their faith per Allah's commandment are classified as infidels (rejecting the truth) since they are not surrenderers.

This religious unity, in his opinion, is founded on the Prophet Muhammad SAW's words, "We are among the prophets, our religion is one."¹⁴ Specifically, the *tauhid* (monotheistic) doctrine is predicated on submission to the presence of God. Indeed, monotheistic "divinity consciousness" (*taqwa*) is a direct connotation of *al-Islam*, which generically signifies submitting to God's presence. *Al-din* is *al-Islam* (submission). Allah signifies that the bond (*al-din*) with Allah is an attitude of surrender (*al-Islam*). Cak Nur's interpretation of "*al-din*" and "*al-Islam*" in God's word, Surah Ali Imran, verse 19.

Furthermore, in Surah Ali Imran, verse 85, he reads the identical word: "There is no religion without surrender." As the Qur'an confirms, religion without submission is false "Whoever seeks a religion other than al-Islam (submission) will not be accepted, and he will be among the losers in the hereafter. His interpretation is identical to that of modern commentator Muhammad Asad when interpreting Surat Ali Imran verse 19, "Behold, then only (real) religion in the sight of God is (man's) self-surrender into Him." ("The only religion (which is right) in God's eyes is a surrender to Him"). According to Asad and Cak Nur, in this verse, *al-Islam* is understood as the essential religion revealed by Allah from the Prophet Adam till the Prophet Muhammad. It was sent by Allah at every age until the appearance of the Prophet Muhammad brought it to an end." This interpretation, in reality, does not contradict the traditional Sunni interpreters, such as Ibn Kathir, who interpret verse 19 as follows: "This verse is a notification from Allah that He accepts no religion other than *al-Islam*, namely religiously obeying the Apostles.¹⁵ It is only that these classical interpreters continue to underline that *al-*

¹⁴ According to Ibn Taymiyah, this hadith is valid because it was narrated by Bukhari and Muslim. See, Ibnu Taymiyah, *Iqtidha al-Sirath al-Mustaqim Li Mukhalafati Ashhab al-Jahim*, Cet. VII (Riyad: Dar 'Alam al-Kutub, 1999), p. 381.

¹⁵ See Ibnu Katsir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'anil al-Adzim*, vol. 1 (Riyadh: Dar al-Thiba, 1999), p. 52.

Islam, in this context, refers to the Islam presented by the Prophet Muhammad. They claim that the last Prophet's *al-Islam* is the most up-to-date. Thus, it replaces the prior definition of *al-Islam*. However, Mufassir Mu'taziliy, like Al-Zamakhsary in Al-Kasyaf, defines "al-Islam" as a monotheistic and just religion.¹⁶

Islam is a religion of *rahmatan Lil Alamin*, which means that it benefits more than just the Islamic community. Theologically, the notion of Islam's universality may be traced back to the terms *al-Islam*, which implies surrender to God or peace. According to this understanding, all authentic faiths must be *al-Islam*.¹⁷ since they teach God's obedience and peace. This understanding of the word Islam will lead to the concept of the unity of prophecy and unity of humanity. Second, it is a consequence of the concept of God's oneness (the unity of God or Tawhid). All of these ideas make Islam global and capable of helping the entire world. This position necessitates Muslims to act as human intermediates (*ummattan wasathan*) and witnesses (*syuhada*).

Because the Qur'an teaches religious pluralism, an inclusivist attitude exists. In the heyday of Islam, this attitude of inclusivism became a principle that anchored religious freedom policy. Cak Nur claimed that, while not identical to those in modern times, the concepts of religious freedom in this era are additional advancements that are more commensurate with those in classical Islamic times.

D. The Urgency of Religious Ethics

Al-Akhlak al-Karimah is the essence of the Prophet Muhammad's mission, as he stated: "Indeed, I was sent to perfect noble character." *Akhlak* or moral precepts are central to all religions. In this instance, religious ethics is required in the relationship of religious people. Nurcholish Majid attempts to present Allah's

¹⁶ See al-Zamakhsary, *Al-Kasyaf*, Juz 1 (Riyadh: Maktabah Syamilah 2.09, n.d.), p. 260.

¹⁷ This is in line with the opinion of Ibn Taymiyah, who, according to him, the base of religion is *al-Islam*, although the Shari'a varies. See Ibnu Taymiyah, *Al-Furqān Baina Awliyā' Ar-Rahmān Wa Awliyā' Asy-Syaythān* (Riyadh: Maktabah Dar al-Minhaj, 1428).

message in the Qur'an regarding religious ethics, as shown in QS Al-Ankabut: 29:46. He interprets this verse as:

"You do not quarrel with devotees of the scriptures (others), but with something (method) that is superior (for example; polite, tolerant), except for those who are unjust from them. My God and your God are the same, and we (all) submit (Muslimun) to Him." and say, "We believe in what has been revealed to us as well as what has been revealed to you."

According to him, this verse forbids Muslims from debating with followers of other holy books in the best possible way, including retaining decency and tolerance, save for those who act unfairly. Muslims must always highlight that all of us, followers of various holy books, both worship and surrender (Muslims) to God Almighty.

Even if we know with confidence that another person worships an entity other than God Almighty, we are not permitted to be rude to that individual. According to the Qur'an, as a result of the cultivation of hostility without appropriate information, they would turn against and do the same act of disrespect towards Allah the Almighty.

But do not revile those [beings] whom they invoke instead of God, lest they revile God out of spite, and in ignorance: for, goodly indeed have We made their doings appear unto every community In time, [however,] unto their Sustainer they must return: and then He will make them [truly] understand all that they were doing (Al-An'am:108).

Healthy worldly connections must be preserved even in the face of assaults and disdain. The saying "To you your religion, to me my religion" (*Al-Kāfirun*: 6) applies in this context. Gamal Al-Banna,¹⁸ an Egyptian pluralist figure, has stressed this type of religious civility. Other than Islam, he believes it is time for Islamic preachers to understand that they are not forced to convert to Islam. They have no authority to suggest that anyone other than Muslims go

¹⁸ See Gamal al-Banna, *Al-Ta'addudiyah Fi al-Mujtama' al-Islami Dalam Doktrin Pluralisme Dalam al-Qur'an*, trans. Taufik Damas L (Bekasi: Menara, 2006).

to hell because they do not hold the keys to heaven. Such an attitude is a flagrant disregard for God's authority. What are the preachers expected to do when the Qur'an states, "O you who have attained to faith! It is [but] for your selves that you are responsible: those who go astray can do you no harm if you [yourselves] are on the right path" (Q.S. al-Maidah:105). The *da'i* (preachers) are responsible for introducing people to Islam and leaving everything up to them. Religious customs are about more than just religion and theology. This is also about social relationships and the repercussions of such relationships. Hidayah is solely given by Allah, not by an Apostle.¹⁹ This is also confirmed in the Qur'an when the Prophet Muhammad sought the conversion of his uncle Abu Talib to Islam.²⁰

"Verily, thou canst not guide aright everyone whom thou lovest: but it is God who guides him that wills [to be guided]; and He is fully aware of all who would let themselves be guided" (Al-Qashah: 56).

The Qur'an's affirmation of guidance belongs only to Allah, and the Apostles as messengers are mentioned in several other verses; Al-Baqarah: 272, Yusuf: 103.

E. Toward True Equality

Taking the premise that all faiths are fundamentally the same and one, their socio-cultural forms are historically distinct. Nurcholish Majid wishes, following the spirit of the Qur'an, that this outer occurrence not impede efforts to find a single platform among all of them. Even if the linguistic and verbal formulations of religious ideas differ, the externalization of faith in the human dimension is unquestionably the same because it entails genuine activity. So, according to the Prophet Muhammad, al-Islam is best conveyed

¹⁹ al-Banna.

²⁰ Ibn Kathir said in his Tafsir that this verse has an asbab nuzul. When Abu Talib was seriously ill before his death, the Prophet Muhammad asked Allah to grant his request so that his uncle, who had contributed a lot in fighting for Islam, embrace Islam at the end of his life, but the Prophet was rejected. See Katsir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'ānil al-Adzīm*, 1: 15.

through humanitarian acts such as aiding the destitute and seeking peace for all without exception.

According to him, Islam is a religion of humanity (*fitrah*), with ideals similar to universal human aspirations. He is convinced that this is one of Islam's basic doctrines. He also contends that the ideals of Islam in Indonesia are consistent with the ideals of the Indonesian people as a whole. As a result, he claimed that the political system that should be established in Indonesia benefits all members of Indonesian society, not only Muslims. According to him, the idea that what Islam seeks is a system that helps everyone is consistent with Islam's inclusive ethos. This viewpoint was supported in the early history of Islam during the Prophet's time.²¹

True equality will be achieved via religious discourse amongst different communities, resulting in a harmonious life. *Kalimatun sawā'*, cited in the Qur'an itself (Q.S. 3: 64), according to Ibn Kathir, is a summons to divine religion to affirm the importance of monotheism, which can be translated into other languages with the unity of God.²² Some interpreters associate the word *sawa* with *adl* (the word of justice), implying that the context of justice is the universal objective of all religions that can come together.

The unity of God represents one root of one belief, manifested in various ways. Unity of God will create one sense as the creation of one God. That is why, in the framework of national life in Indonesia, Pancasila is a shared platform for all religious believers in Indonesia, despite the fact that Islamic scholars formulate Pancasila. Pancasila's points summarize the one god, humanity, deliberate unity, and justice. All religions strive for all of these things. As a result, the Pancasila principles genuinely embody Quranic ideals and serve as the foundation for inter-religious interactions under the auspices of state unity.²³

²¹ See the full work of Nurcholish Madjid, *Keislaman, Keindonesiaan Dan Komodernan*, ed. Budhy Munawar-Rahman (Jakarta: Nurcholish Majid Society, 2019).

²² Katsir, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-Adzīm*, 2: 55.

²³ See Zakiiyyudin Baidhawiy, *Piagam Madinah Dan Pancasila... Dalam Ma'arif Institute, Fikih Kebinekaan*, Cet. I (Bandung: Mizan, 2015), p. 127–59.

F. Verses of the Qur'an Related to Islamic Inclusivism

Inclusivism is the belief that the truth can be found in one's group and other groups, particularly in religious communities. It is important for different interpretations to exist and a dimension of similarity in the substance's values. As a result, truth and redemption are one of the foundations that exist in all religions and do not belong to any one of them.²⁴

Within the framework of Nurcholish Majid's inclusive theology, his emphasis is on understanding God's global message, which is one unit of all divine religions. God encourages us through His word to constantly adhere to that religion because the fundamental nature of various religions is the same (QS 3: 64).

In addition to the verses of the Qur'an cited in the previous discussion, Cak Nur interprets many verses relating to pluralism, including QS Ali-Imran: 64:

Say: "O followers of earlier revelation! Come unto that tenet which we and you hold in common: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall not ascribe divinity to aught beside Him, and that we shall not take human beings for our lords beside God." And if they turn away, then say: "Bear witness that it is we who have surrendered ourselves unto Him."

When Ibrahim asked, pleadingly, what about my descendants, He responded, " My covenant does not embrace the evildoers" (QS. 2:124). According to him, the connotation of the word *sawa'* is that anyone can obtain salvation if he believes in Allah, the afterlife, and performs well, regardless of whether he is a descendant of Prophet Abraham like the Jews or not. This is, of course, consistent with God's affirmation to Prophet Abraham himself, when he designated the Prophet to be the leader of mankind.

As a reinforcement of the word *sawa'* in the *samawi* religions, he sees the essence of the revealed faiths as teaching surrender to God to obtain peace and redemption. He claims that the Qur'an confirms

²⁴ Ulfa, "Mencermati Inklusivisme Agama Nurcholish Madjid," p. 239.

Prophet Ibrahim, also known as *Abu al-Anbiyya* (Father of the Prophets), as a surrenderer.

Abraham was neither a "Jew" nor a "Christian" but was one who turned away from all that is false, having surrendered himself unto God; and he was not of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Him (Ali Imran: 67).

Similarly, it is explained in another verse that the best religious person is the one who submits to Allah:

And who could be of better faith than he who surrenders his whole being unto God and is a doer of good withal, and follows the creed of Abraham, who turned away from all that is false - seeing that God exalted Abraham with His love (QS. An-Nisa: 125).

The assertions of a group of people who think the Qur'an explains why other religious organizations are hostile to Islam must be verified factually. This is demonstrated by Nurcholish Majid's interpretation of Surah Al-Baqarah verse 120:

"For, never will the Jews be pleased with thee. nor yet the Christians, unless thou follow their own creeds. Say: "Behold, God's guidance is the only true guidance." And, indeed, if thou shouldst follow their errant views after all the knowledge that has come unto thee. thou wouldst have none to protect thee from God, and none to bring thee succour" (Al-Baqarah;120).

He interprets this verse with the phrase, "Jews and Christians do not like you (Muhammad) until you follow their religion." This verse is frequently cited as evidence of hatred toward Judaism and Christianity. According to his interpretation, the sentence is a factual statement that has nothing to do with Islam's hatred. That Jews and Christians dislike Islam, and vice versa, is a part of everyday psychological occurrences.²⁵

²⁵ Komarudin Hidayat and Wahyuni Nafis, *Agama Masa Depan: Perspektif Filsafat Perennial* (Jakarta: Gramedia dan Paramadina, 1998), p. 15.

However, Imam Nawawi al-Jawi al-Bantani, who specified the preceding scripture, believes otherwise. According to him, the Jews of Medina and the Christians of Najran will be dissatisfied with the Prophet Muhammad in this verse.²⁶ According to Abdul Moqsith Ghazali, the term 'anka' is used instead of 'ankum' in that passage. This suggests that this verse only applies in certain circumstances, implying that not all Jews and Christians act similarly. The point is that hatred of Jews and Christians is intended solely at the Prophet Muhammad and not at his followers.²⁷ Allah's words confirm this:

[But] they are not all alike: among the followers of earlier revelation, there are upright people²⁸Who recites God's messages throughout the night and prostrate themselves [before Him]. They believe in God and the Last Day, enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and vie with one another in doing good works: these are among the righteous. And whatever good they do, they shall never be denied the reward thereof: for God has full knowledge of those who are conscious of Him. (Ali Imran: 113-115)

In this verse, Hasan Hanafi stated that there are excellent individuals among Jews and Christians, particularly those who trust in one God and His signs. They worship Allah, obey the prophets' messages, believe in the end times, conduct well, encourage others to do the same, and denounce evil deeds.²⁹

However, the Qur'an has clarified the hostile attitude of some Jews and polytheists towards believers, in contrast to Christians, who are often polite and compassionate toward believers. More information can be found in God's word.

²⁶ Abdul Moqsith Ghazali, *Argumen Pluralisme Agama* (Depok: KataKita, 2009), p. 282–83.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 283.

²⁸ Some Mufassir interpreters that the straight people of the Book here are the people of the Book who have embraced Islam. See *Qur'an Dan Terjemah*.

²⁹ Hasan Hanafi, *Dialog Agama Dan Revolusi* (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 1994), p. 55–56.

Thou wilt surely find that, of all people, the most hostile to those who believe [in this divine writ] is the Jews as well as those who are bent on ascribing divinity to aught beside God; and thou wilt surely find that, of all people, they who say, "Behold, we are Christians," come closest to feel affection for those who believe [in this divine writ]: this is so because there are priests and monks among them, and because these are not given to arrogance (Al-Maidah: 82).

According to him, the verse above is founded on the fact that the Prophet had confrontations with Jews and Christians, particularly Jews. Meanwhile, Christians were confronted indirectly when his friends requested Habasyah (Ethiopia) for political protection and were welcomed by King Negus. As a result, when king Negus died, the Prophet encouraged his companions to worship him. However, it was unclear whether or not the Negus converted to Islam. But what is evident is that his belief in Allah's oneness is consistent with Islamic teachings, which is essentially what Islam is, namely, the teaching of obedience to Allah. That is why the preceding verse is true, given how difficult the polemic between the Prophet and the Jews is and how Christians who recognize Islam's truth as their truth are.³⁰

According to history, the Prophet once urged Christians to worship at the Prophet's Mosque. According to history, after consulting with the Prophet, the Christians of Najran declared, "We must go out now and hold a service." What did the Prophet have to say? "There's no need to go; just perform the service here (Nabawi Mosque)." Finally, services were held at the Prophet's Mosque. The episode was documented in the canonical book of fiqh, written by Ibn Qayyim, who then concluded that non-Muslims might visit mosques and even function as a place of worship for them as long as it is not done regularly. Even Cak Nur recalled that as a Buya Hamka student, he was once requested to take tourists into the al-Azhar mosque.³¹

³⁰ Hidayat and Nafis, *Agama Masa Depan: Perspektif Filsafat Perennial*, p. xxxiv–xxxv.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. xxxv–xxxvi.

G. Conclusion

Three mindsets arose throughout the community in dealing with diversity. First, a limited mindset that only cares about his group and believes he is correct while other groups are incorrect. Second is a limited openness attitude, accepting diversity but treating it carefully while maintaining self-identity. The third is a pluralistic attitude in which one tries to blend in without limiting and maintaining one's identity.

Nurcholish Majid supports pluralism, despite his refusal to recognize the elimination of an identity. A pluralist attitude is required to create a pluralistic inter-religious relationship in Indonesia. This is evident from Cak Nur's inclusive interpretation method in comprehending Qur'anic texts concerning inter-religious relations. Cak Nur, on the other hand, believes that identity must be preserved. Recognizing the reality of other religions does not mean that their identities are lost. A Muslim respects and appreciates adherents of different religions while maintaining his Islamic identity. [.]

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Nurcholish Majid's Inclusive Interpretation Pattern in Understanding Religious Tolerance Verses

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Nurcholish Majid's Inclusive Interpretation Pattern in Understanding Religious Tolerance Verses

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Abstract : *Inclusive theology manifests itself in religious plurality, particularly in Indonesia, a pluralistic country with many diverse races, ethnicities, and religions. Islam, through its holy text Al-Qur'an, instructs its people to appreciate one another and forbids religious disputes. This paper attempts to reinterpret the verses of religious tolerance by combining the theme interpretation method and content analysis with an inclusive theological approach to address the challenge of interpreting the verses of tolerance. This paper leads to an understanding that a pluralist mindset is required in building inter-religious interactions in Indonesia by embracing the reality of other religions while maintaining one's Muslim identity.*

Keywords: *Inclusive Interpretation; Plurality; Tolerance*

Abstract : *Teologi Inklusif muncul pada pluralitas dalam beragama, khususnya di Indonesia yang merupakan sebuah negara plural dengan banyaknya ragam ras, suku dan agama. Islam dengan kitab sucinya Al-Qur'an mengajarkan kepada umatnya untuk saling menghormati dan melarang saling bertikai antar pemeluk agama. Melalui tafsir inklusif yang dikembangkan oleh Cak Nur, tulisan ini mencoba menginterpretasikan kembali ayat-ayat toleransi beragama dengan menggunakan metode tafsir tematik dan content analysis dengan pendekatan teologi inklusif untuk*

mengupas persoalan pemahaman ayat-ayat toleransi. Sehingga menghasilkan sebuah pemahaman bahwa sikap pluralis diperlukan dalam membina hubungan antar umat agama di Indonesia dengan mengakui kebenaran agama lain tanpa menghilangkan identitas sebagai seorang muslim.

Kata kunci: *Pluralitas; Tafsir Inklusif; Toleransi.*

A. Introduction

Human life is marked by the diversity of nations, ethnicities, religions, and civilizations. This diversity is undeniably a tool of existence. However, in this diversity, there are moments when intersections occur that result in "conflict" amongst various strata of society. Conflicts and wars between tribes or nations have occurred throughout history, some of which have been precipitated by the issue of diversity. Some people see diversity as a disparity, but some see it as a challenge. In this setting, it is obvious that the Indonesian people are ethnically, culturally, and linguistically varied, not to mention the various religions and beliefs represented. This, of course, will make life more exciting.

As a result, this diversity must be treated with proportion because there are frequent causes of conflict amongst individuals in our beloved motherland, typically under the guise of diversity, particularly religion. Islam, the majority religion practiced by the Indonesian people, is frequently blamed. So, how does Islam as a faith freely embrace differences? Is there anything that can bring this country's religions together, so that religious people do not have to fight each other? Cak Nur's study of the inclusive interpretation approach in understanding the verses of tolerance provided answers to the questions.

This study attempts to answer the above concerns with an inclusive theology approach that departs from the interpretation of the holy verses of the Qur'an in addressing plurality by employing the thematic ¹interpretation method and content analysis. All of the revealed Holy Books (Injil, Torah, Zabur, and Al-Qur'an) are a revelation from God. One is related to the message of piety (Surah 4:131). Cak Nur's emphasis on interpreting God's message is central

to his formulation of inclusive theology.¹ By referring to Muhammad Asad, *taqwa* should be defined as 'God consciousness,' rather than a traditional connotation such as obedience to God's presence.² Specifically, the awareness that God is ubiquitous (omnipresent) in our daily lives, which Hasan Hanafi refers to as '*al-wa'yu al-zatyy*' (Self-Awareness).³

Ma'mun Mu'min discovered that inclusivity of interpretation is required to neutralize all forms of exclusively textualist interpretations that can harm the harmony of a pluralist life in his writings titled "Method of Inclusive Interpretation: Efforts to Dissect the Exclusivity of Al-Qur'an Interpretation."⁴ Similarly, Saifullah underlined that a similar pattern of inclusive interpretation could be found in M. Abduh's Tafsir al-Mannr, particularly in explaining the verses on inter-religious interactions.⁵ This is in contrast to what Maria Ulfa said under the theme "Observing the Religious Inclusivism of Nurcholish Madjid," which stated that Cak Nur's religious inclusivism is not suited for use in Islam.⁶ Conversely, in this study, the emphasis is on studying Qur'anic verses on religious tolerance utilizing Nurcholish Majid's inclusive theory, which is considerably different from the other two studies.

¹ "And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth, and indeed We have commanded those who were given the Book before you and (also) to you; fear Allah. but if you disbelieve, then (know) verily what is in the heavens and what is in the earth belongs to Allah alone, and Allah is Rich and Praiseworthy." Meaning: your disbelief will not bring any harm to Allah because Allah has no will for you. *Qur'an Dan Terjemah* (Jakarta: Kemenag RI, 2002).

² See, Sukidi, *Teologi Inklusif Cak Nur, in the Author's Introduction* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2021), p. vi-vii.

³ See, Hasan Hanafi, *Min al-Aqidah Ila Tsaurah, Qism al-Tauhid* (Kairo: Hasan Hanafi, 1999). At the beginning, Hanafi review that the presence of God as '*al-wa'yu al-zatyy*' in humans

⁴ Makmun Mu'min, "Metod³ Tafsir Inklusif: Upaya Membedah Eksklusivitas Interpretasi Al-Qur'an," *Hermeneutik: Jurnal Ilmu al-Qur'an dan Tafsir*, Vol. 8, no. 1 (2014).

⁵ Saifullah, "Inklusifisme Tafsir Al-Mannar," *Dialogia: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Sosial*, Vol. 6, no. 2 (2008).

⁶ Maria Ulfa, "Mencermati Inklusivisme Agama Nurcholish Madjid," *Kalimah: Jurnal Studi Agama dan Pemikiran Islam*, Vol. 11, no. 2 (2013): p. 249.

B. Nurcholish Majid and Theories of Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Pluralism

Nurcholish Majid⁷ was born on March 17, 1939, in Jombang, to a NU pesantren family but was associated with the modernist political party Masyumi. His education began at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in Mojoanyar Jombang. His secondary education was completed in Darul Ulum, Rejoso Jombang, one of East Java's most famous *salaf* (traditional) Islamic boarding schools (*Pondok*). Nurcholish, despite his Masyumi political leaning, did not feel at ease studying at a pesantren with NU political affiliation. As a result, he decided to relocate to Pondok Modern Gontor, Ponorogo. In this location, he learned the fundamentals of the Islamic religion, particularly Arabic and English. As a result, his time at Gontor significantly impacted his personality. This claim is evidenced in his description of Gontor: "Gontor was undoubtedly a modern Islamic boarding school. It was rather modern for its size at the time." Its many activities, systems, attitudes, and educational and teaching approaches make it so. The material it teaches reflects its modernism. In summary, Gontor was an enclave cut off from the rest of the world. As a result, a Madiun priest was taken aback when he arrived. Gontor, he claims, is already a "*pondok* modern (modern Islamic boarding school)." This priest is responsible for the term "*pondok* modern."⁸ He subsequently went on to the Faculty of Adab IAIN Syahid in Jakarta (1968) and then to the University of Chicago (1978-1984), where he got his Ph.D. in Islamic Philosophy with a dissertation on philosophy and kalam (theology) according to Ibn Taymiyah. Cak Nur passed in 2006 after years of suffering from chronic liver illness, which required him to undergo unsuccessful liver transplant surgery.

His works are widely distributed and published, including *Islam, Modernity, and Indonesianness* (1987), *Islam: Doctrine and Civilization* (1992), *Islamic Democracy and Indonesianness* (1993),

⁷ This biography of Cak Nur was extracted from the review of Budhy Munawar-Rachman, *Islam and Nurcholish Majid's Pluralism* (Jakarta: Universitas Para Madina, 2007).

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 2-3.

Contextualization of Islamic Doctrine in History (1994), Islam Religion of Civilization (1995), Islam the Religion of Humanity (1995), Open Dialogue (1997), The Skyline of Islamic Civilization (1997), From Islamic Boarding Schools (1997), Religious Journeys for Umrah and Haj (1997). Not to mention his independent writings, which have appeared in national and international print media.

He then attempted to follow Alan Race's⁹ concepts on tripolar typology, notably exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism, through his many writings. Many scientists disagree with this hypothesis, particularly when it is applied to the text of the Qur'an.

Exclusivism departs from the core premise that only one religion is true and provides the best way of life. Other religions are viewed as false and deceptive in and of themselves. This statement is based on a unique logic based on the assumption that if a human civilization responds to the universal need for truth, then anything that contradicts civilization and universal truth is inherently bad.

In contrast to exclusivism, inclusivism believes that truth and the power of salvation exist in particular faiths while also believing that truth exists in other religions. In other words, the conviction in the truth of one's religion is firmly held while openly acknowledging that other religious traditions also give the truth.

Pluralism, the third category, opposes both exclusivism and inclusivism. Pluralism elevates religions to the same level, each with its distinct value proposition. That is, every religion claims the truth on its terms. As a result, this concept assumes that each religion has its role as a way of life, and any attempt to judge or consider the idea of the truth of other religions with the size and measure of one's religion is wrong.¹⁰

⁹ Alan Race is a theologian of the Anglican Church who is renowned for studying religious theology. He writes in theology and interfaith dialogue and is Chief Editor of the international journals 'Interreligious Insight: A Journal of Theology and Engagement'. See Ian Markham, "'Christianity and Other Religion.'" In *The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology*. Gareth Jones (Ed.). (Malden: MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004).

¹⁰ Imam Hanafi, "Eksklusivisme, Inklusivisme, dan Pluralisme: Membaca Pola Keberagamaan Umat Beriman," *Al-Fikra: Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman*, Vol. 10, no. 2 (2011): p. 392-397.

C. Understanding of God, Man, and Religion

1. Understanding the One God

The primary belief is that Allah Almighty has set idioms, methods, techniques, and routes for each group of humans. It is not allowed for humans to blame each other and impose their will on one another to follow their idioms, methods, techniques, and routes. Humans, on the other hand, should leave their separate roles and compete to do a lot of good; as Allah states:

“And unto thee [O Prophet] have We vouchsafed this divine writ, setting forth the truth, confirming the truth of whatever there still remains of earlier revelations and determining what is true therein. Judge, then, between the followers of earlier revelation in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high, and do not follow their errant views, forsaking the truth that has come unto thee. Unto every one of you have We appointed a [different] law and way of life. And if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but [He willed it otherwise] in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed unto, you. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works! Unto God you all must return; and then He will make you truly understand all that on which you were wont to differ”. (Al-Maidah: 48)

Cak Nur defines this as teaching on relationships and associations based on the belief that every religion, in its unique manner, strives to reach the truth. As a result, followers of these religions are expected to comprehend and carry out their religious orders without feeling distracted, threatened, or guilty. As a result, an attitude of diversity inclusive of every individual religious community is an urgent requirement that must be pursued consistently to be realized successfully in this plural republic.

Although there are numerous ways, methods, or roads to God, the God to be addressed is the same, God Almighty. God, to whom all hands reach out in search of His protection. That is, without exception, the God of all mankind. Cak Nur's sentiment is similar to that of Abul Kamal Azad, who coined the phrase "al-Din wahid wa

al-syari'at mukhtalifah" (no difference in *Din*, only in *Syar'a*), implying that religion remains the same regardless of Shari'ah.¹¹ The lesson is that we must trust in God Almighty and act following our faith. God's commandments are the same in every era and are communicated to humanity in the same way in every setting. This is what religion has to offer humans throughout the years and under all conditions.¹²

He appears to be embracing Perennial Philosophy, similar to Sayyed Husein Naser, whose premise is that all religions have the same truth. It's only that one of them is a persona that forcefully advocates modernity, while the other frequently voices traditionalism.

2. Understanding the One Humanity

Cak Nur emphasized that plurality, as revealed in the Qur'an, is a reality that has become God's will, as stated in the Qur'an:

"O men! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female and have made you into nations and tribes so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him. Behold, God is all-knowing, all-aware (Q.S. al-Hujurat: 13).

According to him, this verse affirms humanity's unity, and Islam must be seen as an open religion.

Islam is an open religion because it rejects exclusivity and absolutism and highly values pluralism. According to him, Muslims, as the majority group in Indonesia, must also be open, capable of displaying self-confidence, and acting as civil servants who can guide other communities. Meanwhile, the rejection of absolutism suggests that Islam prioritizes the concept of growth and development, specifically the dynamic movement ethos in Islamic teachings.

According to Cak Nur in the Medina charter, the Prophet Muhammad [PBUH] had shown his people about one humanity, not differentiating between rights and obligations in society and the state.

¹¹ See Abdul Kamal Azad, *The Tarjuman Al-Qur'an*, vol. I (Hyderabad: Dr. Syed Abdullatif's Trust for Quranic & the Cultural Studies, 1981), p. 153-160.

¹² *Ibid*, p. 153-160.

This is demonstrated by the usage of the word "ummah" in the Medina charter for all Medina people, despite the fact that the people of Medina were not just Muslims but also Jews. He believed that this document introduced humanity, among other things, to the perspective of freedom, particularly in religious and economic fields, as well as social and political responsibility, particularly collective defense.¹³ This discussion is made clear in the Qur'an:

“Those who have been driven from their homelands against all right for no other reason than their saying. "Our Sustainer is God!" For, if God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, all] monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosques - in [all of] which God's name is abundantly extolled - would surely have been destroyed [ere now]. And God will most certainly succor him who succors His cause: for, verily, God is most powerful, almighty (Al-Hajj: 40).

He claims the Prophet spent ten years in Medina constructing a civilized civilization. Muslims can draw inspiration for modern-day issues from the Prophet's experience during this classical period.

3. Understanding the One Religion

According to Nurcholish's vision, Islam justifies every religious believer's attitude of taking his religious teachings seriously, following the prophets' teachings. God verifies:

“Verily, it is We who bestowed from on high the Torah, wherein there was guidance and light. On `its strength did the prophets, who had surrendered themselves unto God, deliver judgment unto those who followed the Jewish faith; and so did the [early] men of God and the rabbis, inasmuch as some of God's writ had been entrusted to their care; and they [all] bore witness to its truth” (Al-Maidah: 44).

According to this verse, even a Jew who observes his religion correctly according to the teachings of the submitted prophets is considered a surrendered person (Muslim). Jews, on the other hand,

¹³ Munawar-Rachman, *Islam and Nurcholish Majid's Pluralism*, p. 138.

who do not exercise their faith per Allah's commandment are classified as infidels (rejecting the truth) since they are not surrenderers.

This religious unity, in his opinion, is founded on the Prophet Muhammad SAW's words, "We are among the prophets, our religion is one."¹⁴ Specifically, the *tauhid* (monotheistic) doctrine is predicated on submission to the presence of God. Indeed, monotheistic "divinity consciousness" (*taqwa*) is a direct connotation of *al-Islam*, which generically signifies submitting to God's presence. *Al-din* is *al-Islam* (submission). Allah signifies that the bond (*al-din*) with Allah is an attitude of surrender (*al-Islam*). Cak Nur's interpretation of "*al-din*" and "*al-Islam*" in God's word, Surah Ali Imran, verse 19.

Furthermore, in Surah Ali Imran, verse 85, he reads the identical word: "There is no religion without surrender." As the Qur'an confirms, religion without submission is false "Whoever seeks a religion other than al-Islam (submission) will not be accepted, and he will be among the losers in the hereafter. His interpretation is identical to that of modern commentator Muhammad Asad when interpreting Surat Ali Imran verse 19, "Behold, then only (real) religion in the sight of God is (man's) self-surrender into Him." ("The only religion (which is right) in God's eyes is a surrender to Him"). According to Asad and Cak Nur, in this verse, *al-Islam* is understood as the essential religion revealed by Allah from the Prophet Adam till the Prophet Muhammad. It was sent by Allah at every age until the appearance of the Prophet Muhammad brought it to an end." This interpretation, in reality, does not contradict the traditional Sunni interpreters, such as Ibn Kathir, who interpret verse 19 as follows: "This verse is a notification from Allah that He accepts no religion other than *al-Islam*, namely religiously obeying the Apostles.¹⁵ It is only that these classical interpreters continue to underline that *al-*

¹⁴ According to Ibn Taymiyah, this hadith is valid because it was narrated by Bukhari and Muslim. See, Ibnu Taymiyah, *Iqtidha al-Sirath al-Mustaqim Li Mukhalafati Ashhab al-Jahim*, Cet. VII (Riyad: Dar 'Alam al-Kutub, 1999), p. 381.

¹⁵ See Ibnu Katsir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'anil al-Adzim*, vol. 1 (Riyadh: Dar al-Thiba, 1999), p. 52.

Islam, in this context, refers to the Islam presented by the Prophet Muhammad. They claim that the last Prophet's *al-Islam* is the most up-to-date. Thus, it replaces the prior definition of *al-Islam*. However, Mufassir Mu'taziliy, like Al-Zamakhsary in *Al-Kasyaf*, defines "al-Islam" as a monotheistic and just religion.¹⁶

Islam is a religion of *rahmatan Lil Alamin*, which means that it benefits more than just the Islamic community. Theologically, the notion of Islam's universality may be traced back to the terms *al-Islam*, which implies surrender to God or peace. According to this understanding, all authentic faiths must be *al-Islam*.¹⁷ since they teach God's obedience and peace. This understanding of the word Islam will lead to the concept of the unity of prophecy and unity of humanity. Second, it is a consequence of the concept of God's oneness (the unity of God or *Tawhid*). All of these ideas make Islam global and capable of helping the entire world. This position necessitates Muslims to act as human intermediates (*ummatan wasathan*) and witnesses (*syuhada*).

Because the Qur'an teaches religious pluralism, an inclusivist attitude exists. In the heyday of Islam, this attitude of inclusivism became a principle that anchored religious freedom policy. Cak Nur claimed that, while not identical to those in modern times, the concepts of religious freedom in this era are additional advancements that are more commensurate with those in classical Islamic times.

D. The Urgency of Religious Ethics

Al-Akhlak al-Karimah is the essence of the Prophet Muhammad's mission, as he stated: "Indeed, I was sent to perfect noble character." *Akhlak* or moral precepts are central to all religions. In this instance, religious ethics is required in the relationship of religious people. Nurcholish Majid attempts to present Allah's

¹⁶ See al-Zamakhsary, *Al-Kasyāf*, Juz 1 (Riyadh: Maktabah Syamilah 2.09, n.d.), p. 260.

¹⁷ This is in line with the opinion of Ibn Taymiyah, who, according to him, the base of religion is *al-Islam*, although the *Shari'a* varies. See Ibnu Taymiyah, *Al-Furqān Baina Awliyā' Ar-Rahmān Wa Awliyā' Asy-Syaythān* (Riyadh: Maktabah Dar al-Minhaj, 1428).

message in the Qur'an regarding religious ethics, as shown in QS Al-Ankabut: 29:46. He interprets this verse as:

"You do not quarrel with devotees of the scriptures (others), but with something (method) that is superior (for example; polite, tolerant), except for those who are unjust from them. My God and your God are the same, and we (all) submit (Muslimun) to Him." and say, "We believe in what has been revealed to us as well as what has been revealed to you."

According to him, this verse forbids Muslims from debating with followers of other holy books in the best possible way, including retaining decency and tolerance, save for those who act unfairly. Muslims must always highlight that all of us, followers of various holy books, both worship and surrender (Muslims) to God Almighty.

Even if we know with confidence that another person worships an entity other than God Almighty, we are not permitted to be rude to that individual. According to the Qur'an, as a result of the cultivation of hostility without appropriate information, they would turn against and do the same act of disrespect towards Allah the Almighty.

But do not revile those [beings] whom they invoke instead of God, lest they revile God out of spite, and in ignorance: for, goodly indeed have We made their doings appear unto every community In time, [however,] unto their Sustainer they must return: and then He will make them [truly] understand all that they were doing (Al-An'am:108).

Healthy worldly connections must be preserved even in the face of assaults and disdain. The saying "To you your religion, to me my religion" (*Al-Kāfirun: 6*) applies in this context. Gamal Al-Banna,¹⁸ an Egyptian pluralist figure, has stressed this type of religious civility. Other than Islam, he believes it is time for Islamic preachers to understand that they are not forced to convert to Islam. They have no authority to suggest that anyone other than Muslims go

¹⁸ See Gamal al-Banna, *Al-Ta'addudiyah Fi al-Mujtama' al-Islami Dalam Doktrin Pluralisme Dalam al-Qur'an*, trans. Taufik Damas L (Bekasi: Menara, 2006).

to hell because they do not hold the keys to heaven. Such an attitude is a flagrant disregard for God's authority. What are the preachers expected to do when the Qur'an states, "O you who have attained to faith! It is [but] for your selves that you are responsible: those who go astray can do you no harm if you [yourselves] are on the right path" (Q.S. al-Maidah:105). The *da'i* (preachers) are responsible for introducing people to Islam and leaving everything up to them. Religious customs are about more than just religion and theology. This is also about social relationships and the repercussions of such relationships. Hidayah is solely given by Allah, not by an Apostle.¹⁹ This is also confirmed in the Qur'an when the Prophet Muhammad sought the conversion of his uncle Abu Talib to Islam.²⁰

"Verily, thou canst not guide aright everyone whom thou lovest: but it is God who guides him that wills [to be guided]; and He is fully aware of all who would let themselves be guided" (Al-Qashah: 56).

The Qur'an's affirmation of guidance belongs only to Allah, and the Apostles as messengers are mentioned in several other verses; Al-Baqarah: 272, Yusuf: 103.

E. Toward True Equality

Taking the premise that all faiths are fundamentally the same and one, their socio-cultural forms are historically distinct. Nurcholish Majid wishes, following the spirit of the Qur'an, that this outer occurrence not impede efforts to find a single platform among all of them. Even if the linguistic and verbal formulations of religious ideas differ, the externalization of faith in the human dimension is unquestionably the same because it entails genuine activity. So, according to the Prophet Muhammad, al-Islam is best conveyed

¹⁹ al-Banna.

²⁰ Ibn Kathir said in his Tafsir that this verse has an *asbab nuzul*. When Abu Talib was seriously ill before his death, the Prophet Muhammad asked Allah to grant his request so that his uncle, who had contributed a lot in fighting for Islam, embrace Islam at the end of his life, but the Prophet was rejected. See Katsir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'ānil al-Adzīm*, 1: 15.

through humanitarian acts such as aiding the destitute and seeking peace for all without exception.

According to him, Islam is a religion of humanity (*fitrah*), with ideals similar to universal human aspirations. He is convinced that this is one of Islam's basic doctrines. He also contends that the ideals of Islam in Indonesia are consistent with the ideals of the Indonesian people as a whole. As a result, he claimed that the political system that should be established in Indonesia benefits all members of Indonesian society, not only Muslims. According to him, the idea that what Islam seeks is a system that helps everyone is consistent with Islam's inclusive ethos. This viewpoint was supported in the early history of Islam during the Prophet's time.²¹

True equality will be achieved via religious discourse amongst different communities, resulting in a harmonious life. *Kalimatun sawā'*, cited in the Qur'an itself (Q.S. 3: 64), according to Ibn Kathir, is a summons to divine religion to affirm the importance of monotheism, which can be translated into other languages with the unity of God.²² Some interpreters associate the word *sawa* with *adl* (the word of justice), implying that the context of justice is the universal objective of all religions that can come together.

The unity of God represents one root of one belief, manifested in various ways. Unity of God will create one sense as the creation of one God. That is why, in the framework of national life in Indonesia, Pancasila is a shared platform for all religious believers in Indonesia, despite the fact that Islamic scholars formulate Pancasila. Pancasila's points summarize the one god, humanity, deliberate unity, and justice. All religions strive for all of these things. As a result, the Pancasila principles genuinely embody Quranic ideals and serve as the foundation for inter-religious interactions under the auspices of state unity.²³

²¹ See the full work of Nurcholish Madjid, *Keislaman, Keindonesiaan Dan Komodernan*, ed. Budhy Munawar-Rahman (Jakarta: Nurcholish Majid Society, 2019).

²² Katsir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'anil al-Adzīm*, 2: 55.

²³ See Zakiyyudin Baidhawiy, *Piagam Madinah Dan Pancasila... Dalam Ma'arif Institute, Fikih Kebinekaan*, Cet. I (Bandung: Mizan, 2015), p. 127–59.

F. Verses of the Qur'an Related to Islamic Inclusivism

Inclusivism is the belief that the truth can be found in one's group and other groups, particularly in religious communities. It is important for different interpretations to exist and a dimension of similarity in the substance's values. As a result, truth and redemption are one of the foundations that exist in all religions and do not belong to any one of them.²⁴

Within the framework of Nurcholish Majid's inclusive theology, his emphasis is on understanding God's global message, which is one unit of all divine religions. God encourages us through His word to constantly adhere to that religion because the fundamental nature of various religions is the same (QS 3: 64).

In addition to the verses of the Qur'an cited in the previous discussion, Cak Nur interprets many verses relating to pluralism, including QS Ali-Imran: 64:

Say: "O followers of earlier revelation! Come unto that tenet which we and you hold in common: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall not ascribe divinity to aught beside Him, and that we shall not take human beings for our lords beside God." And if they turn away, then say: "Bear witness that it is we who have surrendered ourselves unto Him."

When Ibrahim asked, pleadingly, what about my descendants, He responded, "My covenant does not embrace the evildoers" (QS. 2:124). According to him, the connotation of the word *sawa'* is that anyone can obtain salvation if he believes in Allah, the afterlife, and performs well, regardless of whether he is a descendant of Prophet Abraham like the Jews or not. This is, of course, consistent with God's affirmation to Prophet Abraham himself, when he designated the Prophet to be the leader of mankind.

As a reinforcement of the word *sawa'* in the *samawi* religions, he sees the essence of the revealed faiths as teaching surrender to God to obtain peace and redemption. He claims that the Qur'an confirms

²⁴ Ulfa, "Mencermati Inklusivisme Agama Nurcholish Madjid," p. 239.

Prophet Ibrahim, also known as *Abu al-Anbiyya* (Father of the Prophets), as a surrenderer.

Abraham was neither a "Jew" nor a "Christian" but was one who turned away from all that is false, having surrendered himself unto God; and he was not of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Him (Ali Imran: 67).

Similarly, it is explained in another verse that the best religious person is the one who submits to Allah:

And who could be of better faith than he who surrenders his whole being unto God and is a doer of good withal, and follows the creed of Abraham, who turned away from all that is false - seeing that God exalted Abraham with His love (QS. An-Nisa: 125).

The assertions of a group of people who think the Qur'an explains why other religious organizations are hostile to Islam must be verified factually. This is demonstrated by Nurcholish Majid's interpretation of Surah Al-Baqarah verse 120:

"For, never will the Jews be pleased with thee. nor yet the Christians, unless thou follow their own creeds. Say: "Behold, God's guidance is the only true guidance." And, indeed, if thou shouldst follow their errant views after all the knowledge that has come unto thee. thou wouldst have none to protect thee from God, and none to bring thee succour" (Al-Baqarah;120).

He interprets this verse with the phrase, "Jews and Christians do not like you (Muhammad) until you follow their religion." This verse is frequently cited as evidence of hatred toward Judaism and Christianity. According to his interpretation, the sentence is a factual statement that has nothing to do with Islam's hatred. That Jews and Christians dislike Islam, and vice versa, is a part of everyday psychological occurrences.²⁵

²⁵ Komarudin Hidayat and Wahyuni Nafis, *Agama Masa Depan: Perspektif Filsafat Perennial* (Jakarta: Gramedia dan Paramadina, 1998), p. 15.

However, Imam Nawawi al-Jawi al-Bantani, who specified the preceding scripture, believes otherwise. According to him, the Jews of Medina and the Christians of Najran will be dissatisfied with the Prophet Muhammad in this verse.²⁶ According to Abdul Moqsith Ghazali, the term 'anka' is used instead of 'ankum' in that passage. This suggests that this verse only applies in certain circumstances, implying that not all Jews and Christians act similarly. The point is that hatred of Jews and Christians is intended solely at the Prophet Muhammad and not at his followers.²⁷ Allah's words confirm this:

[But] they are not all alike: among the followers of earlier revelation, there are upright people²⁸ Who recites God's messages throughout the night and prostrate themselves [before Him]. They believe in God and the Last Day, enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and vie with one another in doing good works: these are among the righteous. And whatever good they do, they shall never be denied the reward thereof: for God has full knowledge of those who are conscious of Him. (Ali Imran: 113-115)

In this verse, Hasan Hanafi stated that there are excellent individuals among Jews and Christians, particularly those who trust in one God and His signs. They worship Allah, obey the prophets' messages, believe in the end times, conduct well, encourage others to do the same, and denounce evil deeds.²⁹

However, the Qur'an has clarified the hostile attitude of some Jews and polytheists towards believers, in contrast to Christians, who are often polite and compassionate toward believers. More information can be found in God's word.

²⁶ Abdul Moqsith Ghazali, *Argumen Pluralisme Agama* (Depok: KataKita, 2009), p. 282–83.

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 283.

²⁸ Some Mufassir interpreters that the straight people of the Book here are the people of the Book who have embraced Islam. See *Qur'an Dan Terjemah*.

²⁹ Hasan Hanafi, *Dialog Agama Dan Revolusi* (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 1994), p. 55–56.

Thou wilt surely find that, of all people, the most hostile to those who believe [in this divine writ] is the Jews as well as those who are bent on ascribing divinity to aught beside God; and thou wilt surely find that, of all people, they who say, "Behold, we are Christians," come closest to feel affection for those who believe [in this divine writ]: this is so because there are priests and monks among them, and because these are not given to arrogance (Al-Maidah: 82).

According to him, the verse above is founded on the fact that the Prophet had confrontations with Jews and Christians, particularly Jews. Meanwhile, Christians were confronted indirectly when his friends requested Habasyah (Ethiopia) for political protection and were welcomed by King Negus. As a result, when king Negus died, the Prophet encouraged his companions to worship him. However, it was unclear whether or not the Negus converted to Islam. But what is evident is that his belief in Allah's oneness is consistent with Islamic teachings, which is essentially what Islam is, namely, the teaching of obedience to Allah. That is why the preceding verse is true, given how difficult the polemic between the Prophet and the Jews is and how Christians who recognize Islam's truth as their truth are.³⁰

According to history, the Prophet once urged Christians to worship at the Prophet's Mosque. According to history, after consulting with the Prophet, the Christians of Najran declared, "We must go out now and hold a service." What did the Prophet have to say? "There's no need to go; just perform the service here (Nabawi Mosque)." Finally, services were held at the Prophet's Mosque. The episode was documented in the canonical book of fiqh, written by Ibn Qayyim, who then concluded that non-Muslims might visit mosques and even function as a place of worship for them as long as it is not done regularly. Even Cak Nur recalled that as a Buya Hamka student, he was once requested to take tourists into the al-Azhar mosque.³¹

³⁰ Hidayat and Nafis, *Agama Masa Depan: Perspektif Filsafat Perennial*, p. xxxiv–xxxv.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. xxxv–xxxvi.

G. Conclusion

Three mindsets arose throughout the community in dealing with diversity. First, a limited mindset that only cares about his group and believes he is correct while other groups are incorrect. Second is a limited openness attitude, accepting diversity but treating it carefully while maintaining self-identity. The third is a pluralistic attitude in which one tries to blend in without limiting and maintaining one's identity.

Nurcholish Majid supports pluralism, despite his refusal to recognize the elimination of an identity. A pluralist attitude is required to create a pluralistic inter-religious relationship in Indonesia. This is evident from Cak Nur's inclusive interpretation method in comprehending Qur'anic texts concerning inter-religious relations. Cak Nur, on the other hand, believes that identity must be preserved. Recognizing the reality of other religions does not mean that their identities are lost. A Muslim respects and appreciates adherents of different religions while maintaining his Islamic identity. [.]

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