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REVIEWING RELIGIOUS PLURALISM THROUGH A QUR'ANIC APPROACH: THE RELEVANCE OF HAMKA'S *TAFSIR AL-AZHAR* IN INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA

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Abstract

This research examines the Qur'anic approach to interreligious relations through an in-depth analysis of Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar*. The relevance of this study becomes evident considering that religious diversity often triggers conflict and intolerance, as seen in Indonesia and Malaysia. On the other hand, Western approaches, such as religious pluralism, frequently spark controversy and rejection among religious adherents because they are perceived to blur theological boundaries between religions and contradict religious doctrines. Therefore, an approach grounded in religion is more relevant for fostering constructive interreligious relations. The research methodology is qualitative, involving a literature review of *Tafsir al-Azhar* and related writings, along with content analysis. The results of this investigation imply that religious pluralism is unsuitable as an approach for building interreligious relations in Indonesia and Malaysia, given the doctrinal conflicts it poses with the beliefs of various religions. In contrast, a religiously grounded approach, particularly as reflected in the Holy Qur'an through Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar*, is more relevant for creating harmonious interreligious relationships. This approach incorporates key Qur'anic concepts, such as

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tasāmuḥ/samāḥah (tolerance), *ḥuriyyah* (freedom), *salām* (peace), *'adālah* (justice), *iḥsān* (benevolence), and *wasatiyah* (moderation).

Keywords: Qur'anic Approach; Interreligious Relations; Religious Pluralism; Hamka; *Tafsir al-Azhar*; Indonesia and Malaysia.

Khulasah

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pendekatan Qurani dalam hubungan antara agama melalui kajian mendalam terhadap *Tafsir al-Azhar* karya Hamka. Relevansi kajian ini semakin jelas memandangkan keragaman agama yang sering mencetuskan konflik dan intoleransi, seperti yang dapat dilihat di Indonesia dan Malaysia. Sebaliknya, pendekatan Barat seperti pluralisme agama sering menimbulkan kontroversi dan penolakan dalam kalangan penganut agama kerana dianggap mengaburkan batasan teologi antara agama dan bertentangan dengan doktrin keagamaan. Oleh itu, pendekatan yang berlandaskan agama lebih relevan untuk membina hubungan antara agama yang konstruktif. Metodologi kajian ini bersifat kualitatif dengan pendekatan kajian literatur terhadap *Tafsir al-Azhar* dan karya-karya berkaitan, serta menggunakan analisis kandungan. Dapatan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pluralisme agama tidak sesuai diterapkan sebagai pendekatan dalam membina hubungan antara agama di Indonesia dan Malaysia, memandangkan doktrin pluralisme yang bertentangan dengan kepercayaan agama-agama tertentu. Sebaliknya, pendekatan yang berasaskan agama, khususnya yang tercermin dalam al-Quran melalui *Tafsir al-Azhar* Hamka, lebih relevan untuk mewujudkan hubungan antara agama yang harmoni. Pendekatan ini melibatkan konsep-konsep utama dalam al-Quran, seperti *tasāmuḥ/samāḥah* (toleransi), *ḥuriyyah* (kebebasan), *salām* (keamanan), *'adālah* (keadilan), *iḥsān* (kebaikan), dan *wasatiyah* (moderat).

Kata kunci: Kerangka al-Quran; Hubungan antara agama; Pluralisme agama; Hamka; *Tafsir al-Azhar*; Indonesia; Malaysia.

Introduction

In the context of global religious diversity, achieving and maintaining harmony among religious communities poses a significant challenge. Such diversity often sparks tensions and conflicts arising from differences in religious beliefs, cultural values, and interpretations of faith. Interreligious conflicts like these are particularly common in multicultural countries like Indonesia and Malaysia, where people of various ethnicities, races, and religions coexist. According to the 2022 International Religious Freedom Report, Indonesia's population is estimated at 277.3 million, with 87.2% identifying as Muslim, followed by Protestants (7%), Catholics (2.9%), and Hindus (1.7%). Other religious groups, including Buddhists (0.07%), Confucians (0.05%), and indigenous religions, make up 1.3%.¹ Meanwhile, in Malaysia, the population is estimated at 33.9 million (2022), with 18.7% adherents of Buddhism, 63.5% adherents of Islam, and 9.1% adherents of Christianity. Other religious groups, such as Hindus, Sikhs, and Confucians, account for around 9%.² Both countries illustrate the complexity and challenges of managing religious diversity within multicultural societies.

¹ Office of International Religious Freedom, "Indonesia 2022 International Religious Freedom Report" (Washington, DC, 2022), 3, accessed date January 2, 2025, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/indonesia/>.

² Office of International Religious Freedom, "Malaysia 2022 International Religious Freedom Report" (Washington, DC, 2022), 3, accessed date January 2, 2025, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/malaysia/#:~:text=According to the most recent,Jesus Christ of Latter-day.>

Religious diversity in both countries has led to the emergence of various cases of violence and disputes rooted in religious motives. In Indonesia, religious and ethnic-based violence and social conflicts began to surface across different regions. Some of the most notable cases, as mentioned by Wahjusaputri, include the bloody conflict in Ambon in 2001, clashes between Muslims and the Ahmadiyah community in 2008, and the Tolikara incident in Papua in 2015, where tensions escalated from a prohibition of Eid prayers to the burning of a place of worship.³ In Malaysia, religious conflicts have also occurred despite the country's relatively established multicultural framework. Significant cases include tensions between the Muslim majority and religious minorities. For instance, there is concern over the adoption of the term "Allah" by the Malaysian Christian community, which sparked protests and legal action, citing religious sensitivities.⁴ Additionally, the destruction of Hindu temples, such as the Sri Maha Mariamman temple, in Subang Jaya in 2018, led to violent clashes, including intergroup confrontations.⁵ These incidents underscore the ongoing challenges of maintaining religious harmony in both nations.

Interreligious conflicts often involve Muslims, either as victims or, at times, as participants. This underscores the need for the Muslim community to address these challenges

³ Sintha Wahjusaputri, "Religion Conflicts in Indonesia Problems and Solutions," *Sociology Study* 5(12) (2015), 933.

⁴ Abd Hakim Mohad et al., "Understanding The Christian Community's Stance towards the Muslim Community in Sabah : After the Ban on the Usage of the Term Allah," *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 7(8) (2017): 451-461.

⁵ Simon Montlake, "Temple Demolitions Anger Malaysia Indians," *The Christian Science Monitor*, February 07, 2008, accessed date, January 5, 2025, <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-Pacific/2008/0207/p04s01-woap.html>

by drawing from the core teachings of their faith. The Qur'an, as the foundational text of Islamic guidance, offers a rich reservoir of principles for fostering harmony in interreligious interactions. Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar* presents a valuable perspective, highlighting key principles that serve as essential pillars for cultivating peaceful and respectful relationships between religious communities. As noted by Mhd. Abdul Hakim et al., Hamka's concept of *wasatiyah* serves as a critical foundation for promoting unity, curbing extremism, and fostering a just and harmonious society.⁶

Several studies on the concept of interreligious harmony in the Qur'an are readily available. For instance, K. Fadal's study explores interreligious relations in the Qur'anic revelation and its relevance in the modern context, highlighting the thought of 'Ali Jum'ah.⁷ Another study by M. Elius examines interreligious dialogue from an Islamic perspective through qualitative content analysis, drawing on historical interpretations of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.⁸ Additionally, numerous studies have examined interreligious relations in Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar*. For example, our previous study focused on the concept of *kalimah sawa'* in interreligious relations in *Tafsir al-Azhar* and its comparison with Nurcholish Madjid's thought.⁹ A similar study was conducted by H. S.

⁶ Mhd. Abdul Hakim, Arifinsyah, and Siti Ardianti, "Islam Washatiyah Perspective of Tafsir Ibn Kathir and Hamka in the Contemporary Era," *As-Salam: Journal Islamic Social Sciences And Humanities* 2(4) (2024), 155-163.

⁷ Kurdi Fadal, "The Qur'an and Inter-Religious Relation Models in Contemporary World," *Theologia* 31(2) (2020): 185-206.

⁸ M Elius, "Interfaith Dialogue : An Islamic Framework," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh* 68(52) (2023): 193-206.

⁹ Harda Armayanto and Adib Fattah Suntoro, "Konsep Kalimat Sawa' Dalam Hubungan Antaragama: Analisis Komparatif Pandangan Hamka Dan Nurcholish Madjid," *al-Misykah: 1 Jurnal Kajian Al-Quran Dan Tafsir* 3(2) (2022), 199-223.

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Yunitasari, who analyzed the concept of interreligious relations in Surah al-Baqarah 2:256, from the perspective of *Tafsir al-Azhar*.¹⁰ However, a comprehensive study analysing Hamka's interpretation in *Tafsir al-Azhar* on interreligious relations in the context of Indonesia and Malaysia has not yet been found. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge the gap by examining the Qur'anic approach to interreligious relations through the lens of Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar*.

This study is highly relevant in addressing global challenges, particularly within the contexts of Indonesia and Malaysia. Historically, Hamka's thought and *Tafsir al-Azhar* have significantly influenced intellectual discourse in both countries. The main contribution of this research is the development of a framework that can serve as a practical guide for fostering more inclusive, tolerant, and sustainable relationships within a pluralistic global society. Employing a qualitative approach and *tafsir* analysis, this study explores Hamka's views on interreligious relations, with a focus on Qur'anic verses related to pluralism and tolerance. Using content analysis and a contextual understanding of social and historical factors, this research aims to make a significant contribution to strengthening interreligious relations grounded in Qur'anic principles.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in textual and hermeneutic analysis. The primary source of analysis is *Tafsir al-Azhar*, authored by Hamka, supported by secondary sources, including journal articles, relevant translations, commentaries on Hamka's intellectual project,

¹⁰ Hanifatul Sahro Yunitasari, "Analysis of Religious Issues and Interfaith Relations from Surah al-Baqarah 2:256, A Study of the *Tafsir al-Azhar*," in *International Summit on Science Technology and Humanity (ISETH)* (Surakarta: Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, 2023), 2350-2354.

and other Qur'anic exegesis literature, to ensure comparative accuracy and contextual validity. The methodological framework integrates library research (documentary-based research) and content analysis, focusing on identifying key Qur'anic concepts related to tolerance, religious coexistence, and interfaith relations as interpreted by Hamka. Additionally, the research applies thematic exegesis (*tafsir mawḍū'ī*) principles by collecting and analyzing Qur'anic verses that correspond to thematic fields of interreligious harmony such as tolerance (*tasāmuh*), freedom of belief (*hurriyyah*), moderation (*wasatiyyah*), justice (*'adālah*), benevolence (*ihsān*), and peace (*salām*). Hermeneutic techniques, including contextual reading, authorial intent analysis, and sociocultural interpretation, are used to explore how Hamka's exegetical framework corresponds to the sociopolitical realities of Indonesia and Malaysia during his lifetime and in contemporary contexts.

Data analysis adopts a constructivist-interpretive paradigm, emphasizing meaning-making rather than empirical measurement. Content analysis is carried out in three systematic stages: (1) open coding, where all relevant Qur'anic concepts and Hamka's interpretive patterns are identified; (2) axial coding, which organizes identified concepts into thematic categories related to interreligious relations; and (3) selective coding, which synthesizes analytical findings into a conceptual model of Qur'anic-based interfaith engagement. This analytical stage is further strengthened by a comparative evaluation against Western religious pluralism theories (such as those of John Hick and Wilfred Cantwell Smith), thereby enabling critical reflection on philosophical conflict and epistemological divergence. The conclusion is derived through analytical induction, allowing the development of theoretical propositions grounded in textual findings rather than speculative

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assumptions. Overall, this methodological design ensures academic rigor, reliability, and theological relevance in evaluating Hamka's Qur'anic approach as an alternative framework to Western religious pluralism discourse in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Rethinking the Western Approach to Interreligious Relations

The development of interreligious relations in the West has a long history, with a significant milestone occurring in 1893 at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago.¹¹ This event marked the first major gathering in the U.S. at which representatives from various religious traditions, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Judaism, came together for dialogue. While it was a groundbreaking moment for interreligious engagement, the majority of participants were Christians, especially Catholic leaders, which gave the event a primarily "ecumenical"¹² tone rather than being fully interreligious. This raised concerns from the Vatican, which prohibited Catholics from engaging in religious discussions with non-Catholics and emphasized that Catholic participation in such events should be cautious.

Simultaneously, internal dynamics within Christian denominations shaped interreligious engagement. In 1888, the Anglican Church established principles at the Lambeth Conference to restore unity among Christian

¹¹ Egal Feldman, "American Ecumenicism: Chicago's World's Parliament of Religions of 1893," *A Journal of Church and State* 9(2) (1967), 180-199. See also Amy Kittelstrom, "The International Social Turn : Unity and Brotherhood at the World's Parliament of Religions, Chicago, 1893," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 19(2) (2009), 243-274.

¹² Thomas E. FitzGerald, *The Ecumenical Movement: An Introductory History* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc, 2004), 1-14.

denominations.¹³ Meanwhile, the Catholic Church, under Pope Leo XIII, reinforced its stance on Christian unity with documents such as *Apostolicae Curae* (1896),¹⁴ which declared Anglican ordinations invalid, and *Praeclara Gratulationis Publicae* (1894), which called on other Christian denominations to return to the Catholic fold.¹⁵ In addition, the Vatican discouraged Catholics from attending Protestant services or participating in interreligious gatherings.¹⁶ Over the next century, the ecumenical movement grew, with significant initiatives like the "Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity" (1908) and the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, which laid the foundation for the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948.¹⁷ The WCC began integrating various movements focused on Christian unity and interreligious engagement.¹⁸

¹³ Kevin Smyth, "The Anglican Conference at Lambeth, 1958," *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 47(188) (1958), 369-378. See also John Robert Wright, "Quadrilateral at One Hundred: Essays on the Centenary of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, 1886/88-1986/88," *Anglican Theological Review/Supplementary Series* 10 (1988).

¹⁴ Pope Leo XIII, *Apostolicae Curae: Encyclical Letter on the Nullity of Anglican Orders* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1896).

¹⁵ Both documents set a clear boundary for Christian unity, advocating for a return to the unity of the Catholic Church. Before Vatican II, Gregory Baum argued that Pope Leo's statements hinted at the beginnings of a more favorable papal view of ecumenical efforts, despite his belief that true ecumenism could only involve a return to the Catholic Church. See Gregory Baum, *That They May Be One: A Study of Papal Doctrine (Leo XII to Pius XII)* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1958), viii.

¹⁶ C.S.S.R J., Francis Connell, "Pope Leo XIII's Message to America," in *American Ecclesiastical Review* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1945), 6: 249.

¹⁷ James F. Puglisi, "Prayer for Christian Unity in the Twentieth Century," in *A Century of Prayer for Christian Unity*, ed. Catherine E. Clifford (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 47-49.

¹⁸ Joan Delaney, "From Cremona to Edinburgh: Bishop Bonomelli and the World Missionary Conference of 1910," *The Ecumenical Review* 52(3) (2000), 418-431.

During this period, debates arose over the terms "ecumenical," "interreligious," and "interfaith," with "ecumenical" referring to Christian unity and "interreligious" and "interfaith" denoting dialogue and relations among different religious traditions.¹⁹

As discussions on interreligious relations evolved, various models and theories emerged to explain the dynamics of religious interactions in pluralistic societies. One of the dominant approaches in Western academic studies is John Hick's theory of religious pluralism. Hick argues that all religious traditions ultimately lead to the same transcendent reality, albeit through different paths. In his work *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent*, Hick defines religious pluralism as follows:

"...pluralism is the view that the great world faiths embody different perceptions and conceptions of, and correspondingly different responses to, the Real or the Ultimate from within the major variant cultural ways of being human; and that within each of them the transformation of human existence from self-centredness to Reality centredness is manifestly taking place — and taking place, so far as human observation can tell, to much the same extent."²⁰

¹⁹ John Borelli, "The Origins and Early Development of Interreligious Relations during the Century of the Church (1910-2010)," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 28(2) (2018): 81-105.

²⁰ See: John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 36. John Hick (1922-2012) was a British philosopher and theologian who played a significant role in the discourse on religious pluralism. In *An Interpretation of Religion* (1989), he argued that all religions are different responses to one Ultimate Reality. In *God and the Universe of Faiths* (1973) and *The Myth of God Incarnate* (1977), he rejected

Hick's definition of religious pluralism asserts that all religious traditions are fundamentally manifestations of the same ultimate reality, each offering different perspectives and responses to it. This perspective suggests that no single religion holds absolute truth over others, as all faiths contribute to the process of human transformation from self-centeredness to a reality-centered existence. By emphasizing the commonalities among world religions rather than their differences, Hick's pluralistic framework seeks to foster mutual respect and dialogue, challenging exclusivist claims and promoting a more inclusive approach to interreligious relations. This approach has gained widespread support in religious studies, particularly in efforts to foster a more inclusive and dialogical understanding.²¹

In line with Hick, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, a prominent scholar of comparative religion, also had ideas about religious pluralism. In his work *Towards a World Theology: Faith and the Comparative History of Religion* (1981), he introduced the concept of "world theology," which emphasizes the importance of understanding religion through the lens of individual faith experiences. Smith argued that the truth of religion does not lie in rigid doctrines or belief systems, but in the dynamic interaction between individuals and communities with the Ultimate Reality. He stressed that the study of religion should focus

the claim of absolute truth in any one religion, emphasizing that each tradition contributes to the spiritual transformation of humanity.

²¹ Hick's idea of religious pluralism has attracted the attention of researchers. Some studies that examine Hick's thoughts include: Paul R Eddy, "Religious Pluralism and the Divine: Another Look at John Hick's Neo-Kantian Proposal," *Religious Studies* 30(4) (1994), 467-78; C. Robert Mesle, "Hick's Interpretation of Religion," in *John Hick's Theodicy: A Process Humanist Critique*, 86-93 (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991); Perry Schmidt-Leukel, "Religious Pluralism and the Need for an Interreligious Theology," in *Religious Pluralism and the Modern World*, ed. S. Sugirtharajah (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 19-33.

on humans as the subjects of faith, rather than on institutions or formal teachings alone.²² In *The Meaning and End of Religions*, Smith argues that the term "religion" should be abandoned, leaving only "religious" as a personal attribute. He proposes a concept of religion that embraces all beliefs, grounded in *Cumulative Tradition* and *Faith*. According to him, a universal bond can be achieved only if it is built on a religious foundation, which is inherently dynamic and varies across cultures and historical periods, including in the development of Islam.²³ While both Wilfred Cantwell Smith and John Hick supported religious pluralism, they differed in their approaches. Smith emphasized the importance of understanding religion through individual faith experiences and dynamic interactions with the Ultimate Reality. In contrast, Hick emphasized that all religions are different manifestations of the same Reality.²⁴ This difference reflects Smith's focus on the subjectivity of personal faith compared to Hick's more systematic approach.

However, religious pluralism also faces criticism from particularist perspectives, such as that of Gavin D'Costa. In *John Hick's Theology of Religions*, D'Costa identifies three key flaws in Hick's pluralistic approach. First, Hick's claim that all religions lead to the same divine reality contradicts the orthodox Christian teaching that salvation is attained only through faith in Christ. Second, D'Costa argues that Hick's assertion of many paths to God requires a reinterpretation of all religious belief systems, forcing religions to abandon their "one true religion" views. Third,

²² Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Towards a World Theology: Faith and the Comparative History of Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1981), 180.

²³ Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Princeton and New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), 4-5.

²⁴ Kenneth Surin, "Towards a 'Materialist' Critique of 'Religious Pluralism': A Polemical Examination of the Discourse of John Hick and Wilfred Cantwell Smith," *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 53(4) (1989): 655-673.

D'Costa contends that Hick's pluralistic model is logically incoherent, as while claiming pluralism for all religions, Hick excludes other truth claims and treats his own view as truer.²⁵

Meanwhile, Wilfred C. Smith's thought has been criticized by James C. Livingston, Professor of Religion Emeritus at The College of William and Mary. Livingston critiques Wilfred Cantwell Smith's perspective that religious truth resides in the quality of individual faith rather than in an impersonal external reality. Livingston argues that this approach neglects the shared cognitive content inherent in religious beliefs, thereby complicating objective assessments of an individual's sincerity of faith. He also highlights an inconsistency between Smith's commitment to the historical particularity of religious traditions and his view of truth as personal and subjective. Livingston advocates a clearer form of epistemological realism to achieve coherence in Smith's theology of religions.²⁶

Criticism and responses to religious pluralism also arise from Muslim scholars. Anis Malik Thoha, an

²⁵ See: Gavin D'Costa, *John Hick's Theology of Religions: A Critical Evaluation* (Lanham: Univ. Pres. of America, 1987), 73-153. Gavin D'Costa and John Hick engaged in a theological debate on religious pluralism. In D'Costa's article, "The Impossibility of a Pluralist View of Religions," *Religious Studies* 32(2) (1996): 223-232, he criticises Hick's view of religious pluralism. He argues that religious pluralism is incoherent because, while it claims inclusiveness, it actually enforces a disguised exclusivism by rejecting the specific truth claims of each religion. In response, Hick wrote, "The Possibility of Religious Pluralism: A Reply to Gavin," in *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 169-170, in which he asserts that religious pluralism remains coherent and non-exclusive, as each religious tradition is a valid response to the same Ultimate Reality.

²⁶ James C. Livingston, "Religious Pluralism and the Question of Religious Truth in Wilfred C. Smith," *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 4(3) (2003), 58-65.

Indonesian expert in comparative religion, critically examines the theses of religious pluralism in his work *Tren Pluralisme Agama* (2021).²⁷ Thoha reveals that John Hick's concept of global theology and W. C. Smith's world theology are key trends in the discourse of religious pluralism. According to him, although these ideas appear serious, systematic, and sophisticated, they are, in reality, highly detrimental to the coexistence of religious relationships. Thoha highlights one of Smith's theses, which he finds questionable: the need to "reconsider the term religion," which Smith makes central to his intellectual exercise and theoretical foundation for religious pluralism. Smith views the term religion as problematic and even advocates for the extreme measure of discarding the term and erasing the names of existing religions. Thoha argues that Smith's thesis aims to encourage humanity to abandon religion and to replace the social function of religions with a secular and global faith.²⁸

Thoha critiques John Hick's pluralistic hypothesis, particularly his view that all religious traditions are culturally conditioned responses to the same ultimate reality, which Hick calls "The Real." While Thoha acknowledges some resemblance to Islamic theology, especially when considering God's reality as Allah, he argues that Hick's framework ultimately contradicts Islam and other major religions like Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Judaism, as it diminishes or erases God. Hick's substitution of the traditional conception of God with "The Real as It Is in Itself" or "The Real an sich" and his use of Sufi tradition, suggesting *al-Haqq* is superior to Allah, is critiqued by Thoha as a methodological error, since Sufi teachings are not authoritative in Islam, and Hick misinterprets *al-Haqq*, which is one of Allah's names, not

²⁷ Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama: Edisi Kritis* (Jakarta: INSIST, 2021).

²⁸ Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama*, 339-340.

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above Him.²⁹ Additionally, Thoha challenges Hick's epistemological position, pointing out a logical inconsistency in Hick's claim that God's reality is the same across all religions, asking which reason is being used as the standard for evaluation, as Hick's reasoning is subjective and if it is taken as absolute, it would invalidate his entire theory of religious pluralism.³⁰

In Indonesia, the rejection of religious pluralism was formalized through the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) Fatwa Number 7/MUNAS VII/MUI/11/2005, which prohibits the concepts of religious pluralism, liberalism, and secularism. MUI defines religious pluralism as the belief that all religions are equal and that the truth of each religion is relative, which is considered to potentially mix religious teachings and endanger the faith of Muslims.³¹ Similar opposition comes from scholars such as Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi and Adian Husaini from the Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought and Civilizations (INSISTS), who assert that rejecting religious pluralism does not mean rejecting diversity, but rather preserving the purity of religious teachings.³² Additionally, the Muhammadiyah organization rejects the concept of pluralism that equates all religions, while still encouraging the development of religious tolerance and inter-civilizational dialogue.³³

²⁹ Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama*, 349-350.

³⁰ Anis Malik Thoha, *Tren Pluralisme Agama*, 349.

³¹ Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), "Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia Nomor: 7/MUNAS VII/MUI/11/2005 Tentang Pluralisme, Liberalisme Dan Sekularisme Agama" (2005).

³² INSISTS activists present a strong critique of the theology of religious pluralism, focusing on two key aspects: its origins and core ideas, as well as its incompatibility with Islamic teachings. See: Muhammad, "Religious Pluralism in Indonesia: A Critical Analysis of Indonesian Muslim Interpretations," *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 27(1) (2025): 341-382.

³³ Ahmad Khoirul Fata, "Diskursus Dan Kritik Terhadap Teologi Pluralisme Agama Di Indonesia," *Miqot* 42(1) (2018), 105-28.

In Malaysia, the rejection of religious pluralism has been emphasized through fatwas issued by various religious authorities. For example, the Selangor Fatwa Committee issued a fatwa in July 2014 titled *Fatwa Pemikiran Liberalisme dan Pluralisme Agama* (Fatwa on Liberalism and Religious Pluralism), which declares that religious pluralism is contrary to Islamic teachings.³⁴ This fatwa interprets religious pluralism as the notion that all religions hold equal status and that none can assert superiority over another. This perspective is considered to contradict the Islamic belief that Islam is the final and most complete religion. The Penang Fatwa Committee also issued a similar fatwa titled "Fatwa Mengenai Aliran Pemikiran Liberalisme dan Pluralisme Agama" (Fatwa on the Stream of Thought of Liberalism and Religious Pluralism) on September 24, 2020, rejecting religious pluralism.³⁵ The rejection of religious pluralism has also been voiced by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), which states that religious pluralism contradicts Islamic teachings.³⁶ Overall, the rejection of religious pluralism in Malaysia is a stance supported by various religious authorities and scholars, who argue that

³⁴ Majlis Agama Islam Selangor, "Fatwa Pemikiran Liberalisme Dan Pluralisme Agama" (Kuala Lumpur: Government of the State of Selangor Gazette, 2014). See also: Earnie Elmie Hilmi et al., "Perkembangan Awal Pluralisme Agama Di Malaysia," in *Conference: 3rd International Seminar on Islamic Thought* (Bangi: UKM, 2017), 150-157.

³⁵ Mufti Negeri Pulau Pinang, *Fatwa Mengenai Aliran Pemikiran Liberalisme dan Pluralisme Agama*, Warta Kerajaan Negeri Pulau Pinang, Jilid 64, No. 20 (2020): 1-11. See also: Nur Kayrin Muhamad Safri and Ahmad Bazli Shafie, "Pluralism and the Ruling of Religious Freedom in Islam," *International Journal of Islamic Product and Malay Civilization* 3(2) (2024): 11-20.

³⁶ Muzakarah Jawatankuasa Fatwa Majlis Kebangsaan Hal Ehwal Ugama Islam Malaysia, *Aliran Pemikiran Liberal: Hukum dan Implikasinya Kepada Islam di Malaysia*, Muzakarah kali ke-74, 25-27 Julai 2006, Portal Rasmi Fatwa Malaysia.

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this belief system is incompatible with Islamic teachings and can lead to confusion in religious beliefs and practices among Muslims.

Critiques of religious pluralism highlight its incompatibility with societies, such as Indonesia and Malaysia, where religious values play a central role. Pluralism, rooted in a Western secular worldview, tends to misalign with the cultural and social realities of these multicultural nations, where religious diversity is seen as a valuable heritage rather than a problem to be homogenized. Therefore, an alternative approach is needed, one that respects doctrinal foundations and emerges from within religious traditions. In Islam, particularly through the interpretations of scholars such as Hamka, interreligious relations can be examined in ways that align with Islamic teachings and are better suited to these contexts.

Interfaith Relations Policy in Indonesia and Malaysia

Indonesia has long grappled with the complexities of religious diversity, which, at times, has led to conflict and posed challenges to national stability. Since independence, the Indonesian state has shown a consistent commitment to managing this diversity, recognizing it as an essential component of national identity. This commitment is embedded in the state motto, constitution, and foundational ideology.

The national motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) encapsulates a core value of inclusivity and mutual respect.³⁷ Far from being a mere slogan, it reflects Indonesia's enduring aspiration to maintain unity amidst pluralism. Historically, despite occasional interreligious tensions, Indonesian society has demonstrated a resilient

³⁷ Rochimudin, Muhamad Hari Purnomo Hadi, Ahmad Asroni, *Pendidikan Pancasila untuk SMA/MA/SMK/MAK Kelas X* (Jakarta: Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi, 2021), 133.

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capacity for coexistence and social harmony across different faiths and cultural traditions.³⁸

In legal terms, *Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution* explicitly affirms the state's foundation in belief in the One Almighty God and guarantees every citizen the freedom to practice their religion.³⁹ This constitutional protection not only enshrines religious liberty but also reflects a broader commitment to individual rights in matters of belief and worship.

Pancasila, the ideological foundation of the state, promotes interfaith harmony and guides national policies. As both a philosophical and moral compass, Pancasila informs all aspects of governance, including religious affairs. Its third principle, "The Unity of Indonesia," underscores the necessity of preserving national cohesion through peaceful and respectful interreligious relations.⁴⁰ The nation's founders recognized that sustainable stability depends on cultivating social harmony among religious communities.

From the Sukarno era to the Reformation, Pancasila has consistently served as the primary ideological reference for state policies concerning religion. While each regime adopted different strategies, Sukarno's integrative approach,⁴¹ Suharto's ideological centralization,⁴² and the

³⁸ Bruce William Jones, "Unity in Diversity: History and Religion in Indonesia," *Lecture Material for University Students* (Washington DC: Center for International Education (ED), 1995), 6-7, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED391722.pdf>.

³⁹ Republik Indonesia, *Undang-Undang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia Tahun 1945*, Pasal 29, Mahkamah Konstitusi Republik Indonesia, <https://www.mkri.id/public/content/infoumum/regulation/pdf/UUD45%20ASLI.pdf>

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 4

⁴¹ Soekarno, *Filsafat Pancasila menurut Bung Karno* (Yogyakarta: Media Pressindo, 2006), 81.

⁴² Donald James Porter, *Managing Politics and Islam in Indonesia* (New York-London: RoutledgeChurzon, 2002), 38.

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democratic orientation of the Reformation era,⁴³ all grounded their policies in the principles of Pancasila. This continuity reflects an enduring ideological commitment to managing religious diversity as a constitutional and long-term national project, despite recurring challenges in implementation.⁴⁴

By contrast, Malaysia employs a distinct framework, rooted in the concept of *Bangsa Malaysia* (Malaysian Nation), to forge a unified national identity that acknowledges cultural and religious plurality. This vision is formalized through the National Cultural Policy, which designates Malay culture as the core of national identity while accommodating non-Malay cultural elements.⁴⁵ Although Islam is the official religion, as stated in *Article 3(1) of the Federal Constitution*, *Article 11(1)* guarantees the right to religious freedom for all citizens, including non-Muslims. This dual commitment reflects Malaysia's attempt to balance the primacy of Islam with the protection of minority rights as essential to promoting social cohesion.⁴⁶

However, practical challenges persist, especially in the overlapping jurisdictions of Sharia and civil courts.⁴⁷

⁴³ M. Ridwan Lubis, "Pengembangan Kebijakan Nasional Dalam Pengelolaan Kerukunan," *Harmoni* 15(2) (2016), 14.

⁴⁴ Iman Pasu Marganda Hadiarto Purba, dan Permai Yudi, "Implementasi Jaminan Konstitusi terhadap Kebebasan Beragama dan Berkeyakinan di Indonesia," *JPK: Jurnal Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan* 4(2) (2019), 40.

⁴⁵ Muhammad Arafat dan Anisah Budiwati, "Perbandingan Kebijakan Toleransi Beragama di Indonesia dan Malaysia," *Journal of Religious Policy* 3(2) (2024), 165,

⁴⁶ Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil, Wan Naim Wan Mansor, and Azril Mohd Amin, "The Right to Freedom of Religion and Jurisdictional Conflicts in Malaysia," *SINERGI: Journal of Strategic Studies & International Affairs* 2(1) (2023), 69.

⁴⁷ Muhammad Arafat dan Anisah Budiwati, "Perbandingan Kebijakan Toleransi Beragama di Indonesia dan Malaysia," *Journal of Religious Policy* 3(2) (2024), 160-169.

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Disputes involving interfaith marriages, religious conversions, apostasy, and the use of Islamic terminology (e.g., "Allah" by non-Muslims) often reveal tensions between legal provisions and their implementation.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Malaysia offers a compelling case study of managing pluralism through constitutional and cultural lenses. Despite their differing trajectories, both Indonesia and Malaysia, majority Muslim nations with distinct constitutional frameworks, face ongoing challenges in regulating interfaith relations.

Each has the potential to develop religious diversity policies grounded in Islamic values. In this context, revisiting the Qur'an and drawing on the interpretations of respected scholars is essential. One such figure is Buya Hamka, whose thought continues to influence Islamic discourse in both countries.⁴⁹ The following section will explore Hamka's interpretive approach and its relevance to the socio-religious landscapes of Indonesia and Malaysia.

Navigating the Approach to Interreligious Relations in Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar*

Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, widely known as Hamka, was among the most influential Muslim scholars and intellectuals in the Malay world during the 20th century. He was born on February 17, 1908, in Kampung Molek, Maninjau, West Sumatra, and passed away on July 24, 1981, in Jakarta at the age of 73.⁵⁰ He came from an educated and respected Muslim family; his father, Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah (Haji Rasul), was a prominent scholar, a pioneer of the *Kaum Mudo* movement, and a key

⁴⁸ Shad Saleem Faruqi, "Legal Pluralism in Malaysia: Navigating the Civil and Shariah System," *ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute* 27 (2025), 2.

⁴⁹ Syafwan Rozi, Nurlizam, M. Zubair, "The Reception of Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar* within Social Religious Issue in the Malay World," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 25(2) (2024), 247.

⁵⁰ Ibnu Ahmad al-Fathoni, *Buya Hamka Biografi Tokoh Pendidik Dan Revolusi Melayu* (Patani: Arqom patanii, 2015), 33.

figure in Muhammadiyah in Minangkabau. Meanwhile, his mother, Shafiyah Tanjung, came from a distinguished Minangkabau noble family.⁵¹ Raised in a deeply religious environment during the rise of Islamic reform movements, Hamka developed a school of thought that combined the classical Islamic scholarly tradition with a modernist and contextual approach.⁵²

Before exploring Hamka's perspectives, it is crucial to understand the methodology and distinctive features of his interpretation in *Tafsir al-Azhar*. Hamka employed the *tafsir bi al-iqtirān* method, which integrates *tafsir bi al-ma'thūr* (interpretation based on transmitted reports) and *tafsir bi al-ra'yī* (interpretation based on reasoning). This approach harmonizes *naql* (tradition) and *'aql* (rationality), ensuring that his exegesis remains grounded in classical sources while also engaging with contemporary intellectual developments.⁵³ As a modern commentary, *Tafsir al-Azhar* was significantly influenced by earlier works, such as *Tafsir al-Rāzī*, *al-Kashshāf* by al-Zamakhsharī, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* by al-Alūsī, and *Tafsir al-Manār* by Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida. Structurally, the interpretation follows the *taḥlīlī* method, systematically analyzing the Qur'an from Surah al-Fatihah to Surah al-Nas.⁵⁴ The predominant style of Hamka's exegesis is *adabī wa ijtīmā'ī*

⁵¹ Several sources mention that Hamka's mother was his father's third wife. The first wife was named Raihanah, while the second wife was named Hindun. See: Hamka, *Ayahku: Riwayat Hidup DR. Haji Karim Amrullah Dan Perjuangan Kaum Agama Di Sumatera* (Jakarta: Umminda, 1982), 63.

⁵² Abdul Hanis Embong et al., "Between Reformist and Interpretation : Notes on Hamka's Methodological Strategies as Reformist Mufasssīr," in *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Science, Technology, Engineering and Industrial Revolution (ICSTEIR)*, 415-422 (Atlantis Press, 2021).

⁵³ Avif Alfiyah, "Metode Penafsiran Buya Hamka Dalam Tafsir al-Azhar," *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Ushuluddin* 15(1) (2017), 25.

⁵⁴ Dewi Murni, "Tafsir al-Azhar: Suatu Tinjauan Biografis dan Metodologis," *Sayahdah* 3(2) (2015), 21-45.

(literary and socio-cultural), reflecting his background as both a literary figure and an Islamic scholar. He presents his interpretations in a language accessible to diverse audiences and frequently connects them to social, political, and intellectual challenges of his time. With a moderate and contextual approach, Hamka not only interprets the Qur'anic text but also explores its social, moral, and spiritual implications for everyday life. This makes *Tafsir al-Azhar* a work that is not merely normative but also practical in fostering a deeper and more relevant understanding of Islam in contemporary society.⁵⁵

To navigate Qur'anic concepts in understanding interreligious relations, a structured approach is necessary. The first step is to identify key terms or concepts in the Qur'an that relate to interreligious dynamics, drawing on existing research on the subject. Once these terms are established, we can trace the relevant Qur'anic verses that mention them. From there, a deeper analysis can be conducted by interpreting these verses in light of contemporary social and religious contexts in Indonesia and Malaysia, drawing on Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar*. After reviewing various previous studies, several key concepts and terms in the Qur'an are found to be relevant to interreligious relations, including *tasāmuḥ/samāḥah* (tolerance), *ḥuriyyah* (freedom), *salām* (peace), *'adālah* (justice), *iḥsān* (benevolence), and *wasatiyah* (moderation).⁵⁶ The following discussion will explore these

⁵⁵ Armayanto and Suntoro, "Konsep Kalimat Sawa' Dalam Hubungan Antaragama: Analisis Komparatif Pandangan Hamka Dan Nurcholish Madjid," 210.

⁵⁶ Here are some literatures and studies related to the Qur'anic concepts in interreligious relations: Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and Coercion in Islam: Interfaith Relations in the Muslim Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); M.M.A. Abdullah and S.M.M. Mazahir, "Human Relations in Multicultural Societies: An al-Qur'anic Overview," *Sprin Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences* 1(12) (2023): 18-27.

concepts in greater depth and analyze them through Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar*.

1. Tasāmuḥ/Samāḥah (Tolerance)

Tasāmuḥ (tolerance) in Arabic originates from the root s-m-ḥ (س-م-ح), which conveys meanings of openness, generosity, and broad-mindedness. Ibn Manzur, in *Lisān al-'Arab*, defines *samāḥah* as an attitude of generosity and open-mindedness in interactions with others,⁵⁷ while Fayruzabadi, in *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, interprets *tasāmuḥ* as gentleness and ease in social relationships.⁵⁸ Although the term *tasāmuḥ* is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, the concept of tolerance is evident in several verses. For example, Surah al-Baqarah 2:256 states, *Lā ikrāha fī al-dīn* (There is no compulsion in religion), while Surah al-Kafirun 109:6 declares, *Lakum dīnukum waliya dīn* (To you be your religion, and to me, mine). These verses emphasize the principles of religious freedom and respect for differences in belief.

This understanding aligns with Hamka's interpretation in *Tafsir al-Azhar*, where he asserts that Islam is a religion that is both upright (*ḥanīf*) and tolerant (*samḥah*). Hamka emphasizes that tolerance in Islam does not mean blending religious teachings but rather respecting differences while upholding the freedom of belief.⁵⁹ His exegesis of Surah al-Baqarah 2:256 and Surah al-Kafirun demonstrates that Islam rejects both religious coercion and pluralism, which seeks to unify all religions into a single belief system.⁶⁰ Thus, the concept of *tasāmuḥ* in Islam, as explained by

⁵⁷ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1994), 2: 489.

⁵⁸ Al-Fayruzabadi, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risālah li al-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 2005), 225.

⁵⁹ Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar* (Singapura: Pustaka Nasional PTE LTD, 1982), 1: 318.

⁶⁰ Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, 1: 625.

Hamka, is based on respect for diversity while preserving the distinct identity of each religious faith.⁶¹

In Indonesia, Hamka's views on religious tolerance closely reflect the principles of Pancasila, particularly belief in God and national unity. His interpretations of Surah al-Baqarah 2:256 and Surah al-Kafirun 109:6 stress the importance of peaceful coexistence without blending religious doctrines, aligning with the spirit of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* or "Unity in Diversity."⁶² Hamka offers a perspective that maintains firm faith while promoting social harmony amid religious pluralism and truth relativism. In Malaysia, although Islam is the official religion under Article 3(1) of the Constitution and other religions are recognized with certain limitations, Hamka's interpretation remains relevant.⁶³ His approach addresses sensitive issues such as conversion, apostasy, and the use of "Allah" by non-Muslims by promoting tolerance without coercion or doctrinal compromise. He upholds an inclusive Islamic identity rooted in sincerity (*ḥanīf*) and openness.

2. *Ḥuriyyah* (Freedom)

In Islam, *ḥuriyyah* (freedom) holds a broad meaning both etymologically and terminologically. The term is derived from *ḥur* (حُر), which denotes freedom or independence, primarily in the context of liberation from slavery. Ibn Manzūr links *ḥuriyyah* to nobility and honor.⁶⁴ This suggests that freedom in Islam is not merely physical but also encompasses moral and spiritual dimensions, which must be exercised responsibly. Terminologically, *ḥuriyyah* in Islam includes not only physical freedom but also

⁶¹ Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, 10: 8131-8134.

⁶² Muhammad Arafāt dan Anisah Budiwati, "Perbandingan Kebijakan Toleransi Beragama di Indonesia dan Malaysia," *Journal of Religious Policy* 3(2) (2024), 160.

⁶³ Muhammad Arafāt dan Anisah Budiwati, "Perbandingan Kebijakan Toleransi Beragama di Indonesia dan Malaysia," 160-169.

⁶⁴ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, 4: 178.

metaphysical aspects such as religious, intellectual, personal, and political freedom, as outlined by 'Abd al-Rahman Salih al-Jiran in *Min Dawābit al-Ḥurriyyah fī al-Islām*.⁶⁵

In his interpretation, Hamka emphasizes that the concept of *ḥurriyyah* in Islam is the right of individuals to freely choose their beliefs, as seen in Surah al-Kahf 18:29, which states: "The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills, let him believe; and whoever wills, let him disbelieve." Hamka explains that this verse underlines the freedom of choice between faith and disbelief, with each decision carrying personal consequences. While freedom in Islam is fundamental, it is not absolute; each choice, whether toward faith or disbelief, leads to either salvation or misguidance, and thus, freedom must be exercised responsibly in light of its consequences.⁶⁶

In the context of Indonesia, religious freedom is guaranteed in Articles 28E and 29 of the 1945 Constitution, which affirm the right of every citizen to embrace a religion and worship according to their beliefs.⁶⁷ In Malaysia, although Islam is the official religion, Article 11(1) of the Constitution also protects the religious freedom of non-Muslims.⁶⁸ Hamka's perspective offers a moderate theological foundation to reinforce these constitutional principles. He emphasizes that Islam does not impose belief

⁶⁵ 'Abd al-Raḥmān Salīh al-Jirān, *Min Dawābit al-Ḥurriyyah fī al-Islām* (Cairo: al-Jāmi'ah al-Azhar, n.d.), 22-39.

⁶⁶ Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, vol. 6 (Singapore: Pustaka Nasional PTE LTD, 1982), 4191.

⁶⁷ Muhammad Adiguna Bimasakti, "Legal Framework for Recognizing Religions and Beliefs in the Context of Indonesia's Religious Freedom", *Pancasila: Jurnal Keindonesiaan*, vol. 3, no. 1, (2025), hlm. 144, <https://doi.org/10.52738/pjk.v5i1.669>

⁶⁸ Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil, Wan Naim Wan Mansor, and Azril Mohd Amin, "The Right to Freedom of Religion and Jurisdictional Conflicts in Malaysia," *SINERGI: Journal of Strategic Studies & International Affairs* 2(1) (2023), 69.

but grants individuals the freedom to choose, while also highlighting the moral and spiritual consequences of those choices.⁶⁹ His interpretation supports the development of a pluralistic society that respects individual freedom while encouraging ethical responsibility. This approach is vital for sustaining peaceful social relations and preventing religious coercion in both multicultural nations.

3. *Salām (Peace)*

Islam is deeply tied to the concept of peace, as reflected in the very meaning of its name, derived from the root *s-l-m* (سلم), which signifies peace, safety, and security.⁷⁰ The term *salāmah* (سلامة) refers to a state of well-being, free from destruction or harm, both physically and spiritually, emphasizing a life of harmony and security. *Salm* and *salāmah* reflect not only the absence of conflict but a comprehensive sense of peace in all aspects of life. The word *salam* (سلام), meaning peace, appears multiple times in the Qur'an, such as in Surah al-An'am 6:54, Surah Yunus 10:10, and Surah al-Furqan 25:63, highlighting Allah's mercy and the peaceful nature of His servants.⁷¹

Hamka's interpretation of Surah al-Anfal 8:61 provides a deeper understanding of Islam's approach to peace. He emphasizes that Islam does not view war as its primary objective; rather, peace is the priority when the opposing side is open to it. In cases where the enemy expresses a desire for peace, Muslims are encouraged to reciprocate, as long as doing so does not compromise the honor and dignity of Islam.⁷² This perspective underscores that Islam promotes peace both in this world and the Hereafter, emphasizing reconciliation and mutual respect whenever possible.

⁶⁹ Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, 6:4191.

⁷⁰ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 12: 293.

⁷¹ Al-Raghīb al-Isfahānī, *al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1991), 421.

⁷² Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, 4: 2798.

In Indonesia, a peaceful approach to religion aligns with the values of Pancasila and the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) in promoting interfaith harmony. Hamka's interpretation reinforces this by supporting reconciliatory responses to socio-religious conflicts, such as those in Ambon and Poso, and by affirming Islam as a religion of *rahmatan li al-‘ālamīn* (a blessing for all creation).⁷³ In Malaysia's dual legal system and multiethnic society,⁷⁴ Hamka's emphasis on peace also promotes interfaith coexistence and provides a constructive framework for addressing jurisdictional disputes. His interpretation offers a foundation for managing sensitive issues, including the use of the term "Allah" and religious conversion, through dialogue and mutual respect.⁷⁵

4. 'Adālah (Justice)

The term *'adālah* (justice) derives from the verb *'adala* (عدل), which means to be straight, balanced, or to put something in its rightful place. According to Ibn Manzur, *'adālah* signifies the quality of a person who adheres to the truth and avoids injustice,⁷⁶ while Ibn Faris emphasizes its connection to balance and fairness.⁷⁷ In Islam, justice involves upholding rights fairly, without bias or deviation, as shown in Qur'anic verses like Surah al-Nisa' 4:58 and

⁷³ Sagaf S. Pettalongi, "Islam dan Pendidikan Humanis Dalam Resolusi Konflik Sosial," *Cakrawala Pendidikan: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan* 32(2) (2013), 95142.

⁷⁴ Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil, Wan Naim Wan Mansor, and Azril Mohd Amin, "The Right to Freedom of Religion and Jurisdictional Conflicts in Malaysia," *SINERGI: Journal of Strategic Studies & International Affairs* 2(1) (2023), 74.

⁷⁵ Muhammad Arafāt dan Anisah Budiwati, "Perbandingan Kebijakan Toleransi Beragama di Indonesia dan Malaysia," *Journal of Religious Policy* 3(2) (2024), 160.

⁷⁶ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, 11: 430.

⁷⁷ Ibn Faris, *Ma'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1979), 4: 246.

Surah al-Ma'idah 5:8, which stress fulfilling trusts and maintaining justice, even toward those one dislikes.

Hamka, in his interpretation of Surah al-Ma'idah verse 8, focuses on how Islam requires justice to be practiced without influence from love or hatred, particularly towards non-Muslims. He stresses that testimonies must be given truthfully, free from personal bias, and that injustice, driven by emotions like hatred, is strictly prohibited. For Hamka, justice not only brings one closer to piety but also maintains dignity before both Allah and people. He firmly asserts that justice is central to both individual conduct and interreligious relations, emphasizing that it must be upheld impartially, regardless of one's feelings.⁷⁸

In Indonesia, Hamka's interpretation reflects the spirit of Pancasila and the principle of social justice by promoting equal treatment of all citizens regardless of religion.⁷⁹ In Malaysia, his perspective is especially relevant for addressing tensions between the Sharia and civil legal systems, particularly in interfaith cases, where objective and inclusive justice is essential.⁸⁰ Hamka's view affirms that justice is a universal Islamic principle that should guide relations among individuals and religious communities in a pluralistic society.

5. *Ihsān* (Benevolence)

Ihsān linguistically refers to doing good, encompassing meanings such as perfection, respect, and general kindness, with its opposite being *isā'ah*, or doing evil.⁸¹ In Arabic grammar, *ihsān* typically requires an object, as Hamid F.

⁷⁸ Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, 3: 1643.

⁷⁹ Iwandi Agung Manalu, Usman Lubis, Yati Sharfina Desiandri, "Hak Asasi Manusia dan Keadilan Sosial: Analisis Implementasi Nilai-Nilai Pancasila dalam Sistem Peradilan," *Innovative: Journal of Social Science Research* 4(6) (2024), 5308.

⁸⁰ Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil, Wan Naim Wan Mansor, and Azril Mohd Amin, "The Right to Freedom of Religion and Jurisdictional Conflicts in Malaysia," 74.

⁸¹ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 13: 115.

Zarkasyi noted, encompassing actions toward parents, orphans, and the environment, among others.⁸² In Islamic teachings, *ihsān* is part of the trilogy of *Islām*, *īmān*, and *ihsān*, as illustrated in the Hadith of Jibril. Al-Nawawi defines *ihsan* in worship as submitting to and worshiping Allah with full devotion and humility, while Ibn Taymiyah considers it the highest level of faith, surpassing *īmān* in its breadth and application.⁸³ The concept of *ihsān* is strongly emphasized in the Qur'an, where it appears in various forms and meanings over 200 times, highlighting the importance of good deeds, grace, and better behavior. For instance, the term *muhsīn*, meaning "one who does good," is used 36 times, further underscoring the significance of *ihsan* in daily life and spiritual practice.⁸⁴

In the context of religious diversity, *ihsān* represents an ideal approach for Muslims in interacting with followers of other religions. Unlike tolerance, which often relies on mutual benefit, *ihsān* encourages selfless goodwill, demonstrating respect and kindness without expecting anything in return. This does not mean endorsing or legitimizing different religious beliefs, but rather ensuring that every individual's right to practice their faith is respected.⁸⁵ According to Hamka's interpretation of Surah al-A'raf, *ihsān* calls for continuous self-improvement, strengthening one's faith, and promoting ethical conduct in all aspects of life, including worship and social relations. Even in situations like warfare, Islam advocates for ethical behavior, as seen in the practices of figures such as

⁸² Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, *Minhaj: Berislam Dari Ritual Hingga Intelektual* (Jakarta Selatan: INSISTS, 2020), 172-188.

⁸³ Šālih bin Fawzān, *Kitāb al-Tawhīd* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Malik Fahd al-Waṭaniyyah, 1421), 63.

⁸⁴ Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Baqī, *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfaz al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1998), 202.

⁸⁵ Harda Armayanto and Adib Fattah Suntoro, "Managing Religious Diversity: An Ihsan Approach," *Afkar: Jurnal Akidan & Pemikiran Islam* 25(1) (2023), 120.

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Manshur Ibn Abu Amir and Salahuddin al-Ayyubi, who exemplified *ihsān* toward their opponents. Through this, Islam fosters interreligious harmony, urging Muslims to treat others with justice, kindness, and respect while remaining steadfast in their faith.⁸⁶

In both Indonesia and Malaysia, Hamka's interpretation of *ihsān* serves as a relevant ethical principle for navigating religious pluralism. In Indonesia, *ihsān* reinforces the values of Pancasila and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* by encouraging Muslims to treat followers of other religions with kindness and respect, expecting nothing in return.⁸⁷ In Malaysia, *ihsān* offers a constructive approach to easing interfaith tensions within a dual legal system,⁸⁸ fostering a just and dignified interreligious dynamic while upholding Islamic faith.

6. *Wasatīyah (Moderation)*

Wasatīyah, derived from the word *wasat*, means balance or a middle path between two extremes.⁸⁹ In Islam, this concept emphasizes moderation in faith, worship, and social interactions, including interreligious relations. Surah al-Baqarah 2:143 describes Muslims as *ummatan wasatān*, a just and exemplary community for humanity. According to Hamka, Islam serves as a middle path between the extremes of previous religions, Judaism, which leaned towards materialism, and Christianity, which prioritized

⁸⁶ Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, 4:2401.

⁸⁷ Muhammad Muhajir Anshar, "Islam dan Toleransi: Aktualisasi Nilai-Nilai Islam di Tengah Kemajemukan Agama di Indonesia", *Journal of Science and Social Research* 8(1), (2025), 231, <https://doi.org/10.54314/jssr.v8i1.2700>

⁸⁸ Ahmad Yumni Abu Bakar, Farahdina Fazial, Ahmad Afiq Irshad Omar, Siti Aisyah Yusof, Setiawan Gunardi, "Fatwas on Religious Pluralism in Malaysia: A Literature review of Islamic Legal Perspectives", *International Journal of Law, Government and Communication (IJLGC)* 10(39) (2025), 99.

⁸⁹ Ibn Manzur, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 7: 426.

spirituality. The principle of *wasatīyah* guides Muslims to be just and tolerant in their interactions with people of other faiths, avoiding fanaticism and exclusivity. Moderation does not mean compromising one's beliefs but rather adopting a wise and fair approach. By practicing *wasathiyah*, interreligious relations can be built on mutual respect, justice, and social harmony.⁹⁰

Hamka's approach in *Tafsir al-Azhar* provides a more balanced and nuanced framework for interreligious relations compared to the concept of religious pluralism, which tends to equate all religious beliefs as fundamentally equal. By emphasizing core values such as justice (*'adl*), religious freedom (*hurriyyah al-i'tiqād*), and moderation (*wasatīyah*), Hamka advocates for an inclusive yet principled engagement with religious diversity. His interpretation firmly rejects any form of coercion in matters of faith while simultaneously maintaining a clear theological boundary that prevents the dilution of Islamic doctrines. Unlike religious pluralism, which can sometimes lead to theological relativism that undermines the distinctiveness of each faith tradition, Hamka's approach ensures that interreligious harmony is achieved without compromising the foundational beliefs of Islam. Through this perspective, he establishes a model that upholds the integrity of Islamic teachings while fostering mutual respect and coexistence, making it a more relevant and sustainable approach to balancing religious identity and social inclusivity. This approach preserves the integrity of Islamic teachings and fosters peaceful and respectful interreligious coexistence, consistent with the values of Pancasila in Indonesia and the constitutional recognition of Islam in Malaysia.

Conclusion

⁹⁰ Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, 1:334.

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Hamka's interpretation in *Tafsir al-Azhar* provides a strong foundation for interreligious relations in Indonesia and Malaysia, emphasizing the importance of moderation (*wasatīyah*), tolerance (*tasāmuḥ*), and justice (*'adālah*) in fostering social harmony. Islam, as the majority religion in both countries, must balance the preservation of its beliefs with treating non-Muslims fairly and kindly, without compromising its identity. Hamka underscores that Muslims should not accept religious relativism but uphold Islam as the ultimate truth. He highlights that justice in Islam must be impartial, regardless of personal feelings or religious differences, ensuring the rights of minorities are respected while maintaining Islamic principles. This approach allows Muslims to proactively build a just, peaceful society based on Qur'anic values, addressing the challenges of radicalism and excessive liberalism while respecting diversity.

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