



## M. Quraish Shihab and the Epistemic Shift in the Study of Religions from a Qur'anic Perspective

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### Abstract

**Objective:** The primary objective of this study is to uncover and analyze the paradigm of religious studies according to M. Quraish Shihab, particularly as outlined in his magnum opus, *Tafsir al-Mishbah*. **Theoretical framework:** The research is theoretically framed within the thematic (*mawḍūʿī*) interpretation method, drawing from the Qur'an as the foundational text, supported by contemporary Indonesian exegesis. This paradigm offers a critical response to the dominance of Western secular approaches to comparative religion, and seeks to restore a Qur'an-based framework that integrates revelation and human reason. **Literature Review:** The literature review explores prior contributions from figures such as Mukti Ali, al-Biruni, Ibn Hazm, and al-Shahrastani, who laid the groundwork for comparative religious studies from within Islamic intellectual traditions. However, these perspectives often remained fragmented and did not construct a holistic Qur'anic paradigm. **Methods:** Methodologically, this study adopts a qualitative content analysis using the thematic tafsir approach (*tafsir mawḍūʿī*), by identifying, classifying, and interpreting Qur'anic verses related to the concept and discourse of religion. Core sources include the *Mushaf al-Qur'an*, *Tafsir al-Mishbah*, and the official *Tafsir al-Qur'an dan Terjemahannya* by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, complemented by indexes, classical tafsir works, and interdisciplinary literature in religious studies. **Results:** The findings indicate that the Qur'an presents religion in twofold: as divine revelation (absolute) and as human understanding (relative). Shihab emphasizes that both should be studied through principles of plurality and *tawhid*. The Qur'an encourages a multi-method approach involving theological, historical, psychological, sociological, dialogical, and comparative frameworks. The study concludes that Qur'anic religious studies are not only scientific but also carry social, ethical, and theological implications. **Implications:** This research contributes to the development of a Qur'an-based epistemology for religious studies, offering a novel integration between classical Islamic thought and

contemporary scholarly discourse. **Novelty:** It reclaims religious studies from purely secular narratives, advancing a model that is both faithful to revelation and relevant to interdisciplinary inquiry.

**Keywords:** qur'anic paradigm, m. quraish shihab, religious pluralism, thematic tafsir, islamic thought.

## INTRODUCTION

Religious discourse in recent developments feels quite colourful in the development of the world of science. This phenomenon can be seen in the lively various religious discussion forums organized by intellectuals, especially in Indonesia. Mukti Ali, the first professor of Comparative Religion in Indonesia, said that the trend was symptomatic due to the collapse of the notion that the study of religion was unscientific. Religion, according to the view that has developed recently, in addition to containing doctrines of belief, also contains things that can be studied and approached scientifically. This tendency develops religious studies from dogmatic-apologetic and normative studies to rational-empirical and objective studies. Various methods, approaches and themes of study are increasingly developed in line with the development of science, even entering cross-disciplinary forms of study [1]-[3].

The development of scientific methods and approaches in religious studies resulted in the emergence of two camps in religious studies. One school emphasizes a distinctive or so-called *suigeneris* method of understanding religion. This approach relying on the study of religion should not be approached with the scientific method. Others claim that the only legitimate method for conducting any study is the scientific method. Both methods have some drawbacks. The scientific method, for example, is often incompatible with the religious issues under study, ignores problems of personality and the nature of values, and does not touch on the core issues of religion. To overcome the above weaknesses, Joachim Wach proposed a method of synthesis between *suigeneris* and scientific but with the condition that it must be integrated and must be by the religion studied. In line with Wach, Mukti Ali proposed the so-called religio-scientific or scientific doctrinaire method or religious science [4].

According to Mukti Ali, if studied historically, the foundation for the study of religions that developed a scientific-religious approach from Islam was Ali ibn Hazm al-Andalusi (994-1064) who is famous for his book *Al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwa' wa al-Nihal* or Muhammad Abd al-Karim al-Shahrastani (1071-1153) with his book *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, figures who are considered as the foundation of comparative religious science in the Islamic world. Djam'annuri added one more figure who played a role as the foundation of this religious study, namely Al-Biruni (973-1048) who with his famous work *Tahqiq ma li al-Hind min Maqbulah fi al-'Aql aw Marzulah*. After the death of the above figures, the study of religions in the Islamic world experienced a decline and even stagnation. While in the Western hemisphere, it is growing rapidly, so it seems as if this discipline originated in the West, because the colour of the West is very dominant in the development of this discipline. This Western dominance was felt when the Orientalism movement took place in collaboration with Western colonialism all over the world, especially in the Islamic world. Almost all scientific discourse including religious science has been westernized with indications of secularism and secularization, liberalism and liberalization of science including Islamic science in Islamic universities [5]-[7].

Meanwhile, the Qur'an the holy book of Muslims, which is believed mutawatir as a revelation and guidance of Allah contains and discusses many religions in terms of divinity (theology), aspects of mu'amalah, morals and culture. This shows that in the Qur'an there are hints and encouragements, even directions regarding the study of religions as intended in the foregoing, at least in the embryonic stage and still scattered in various suras and verses, need to be studied further for a systematic formulation based on scientific rules [8], [9].

In the Qur'an the key words closely related to religion can be taken from the words al-Dîn, al-Millah, al-Shir'ah or al-Shari'ah, and al-Minhaj. The word al-Dîn with its various derivations in the Qur'an is found in 91 verse 8. Of these verses, the word al-Dîn and its fractions have various meanings according to the context of the sentence. Meanwhile, according to the Qur'an Index compiled according to word fragments in Indonesian by Sukmajaya Asy'ari and Rosy Yusuf, the number of Qur'anic verses containing the word religion or words meaning religion is 124 verses 9. The word syari'ah with its fraction is found in 5 verses, the word al-Millah with its fraction is also found in 18 verses and the word al-Minhaj is found in 1 verse [10], [11].

The discussion about religion in the Qur'an can be broadly grouped into the meaning of religion according to the Qur'an, the true religion according to Allah, the necessity of fighting for the true religion, freedom in religion, the religions brought by the previous Prophets and Apostles, the common mission of all religions brought by the Prophets, traditional or pagan religions, the relationship between religion and other themes. For example, it concerns religious qualities. In other words, it includes the meaning of religion as faith, as civilization and as religion [12], [13].

Departing from the problems as already stated, this study will conduct a study of the Qur'an and the Study of Religions with a thematic approach (mawdhû'î) to reveal the paradigm of the study of religions according to the Qur'an. Looking at the background of the problem as mentioned above, the main question to be answered by this study is "What is the paradigm of the study of religions according to the Qur'an?" [14].

The main questions above further formulated the problems to be studied in this study, namely: (1) The meaning and conception of religion according to the Qur'an; (2) The understanding and scope of study of religions in the Qur'an; (3) The methods and approaches used by the Qur'an in discussing religions; (4) The purpose and significance of the study of religions according to the Qur'an [15].

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This study wants to complement the wealth of studies of religions that have been carried out by previous researchers. The following are shown some studies and research on the study of religions that have been carried out by previous reviewers. The perspective of the study to be developed in this study is what has not been done by the reviewer and researcher [16].

Talking about the study of religions known as "Comparative Religion in Indonesia" certainly cannot be separated from the role of A. Mukti Ali. He is said to be the "Father of Comparative Religion in Indonesia". The study developed by A. Mukti Ali on the methods and systems of comparative religion contains an Islamic vision, such as the sub-themes "attitude of a Muslim towards another religion" and "the use and benefits of comparative science for a Muslim", but has not described a comprehensive view of the study of religions according to the view of the Qur'an [17]-[19].

So are studies conducted by figures who are said to be the foundation of Comparative Religion. According to Djam'annuri, al-Biruni focused his studies on religious and cultural traditions in an integral, deep and comprehensive, empirical and objective manner. Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi, who lived during al-Biruni's time, analyzed the religions known in his time partially based on literalist, critical, empirical and objective approaches. And Shahrastani who was born later, although almost contemporaneously with the two previous figures, elaborated all the religions known in his time using historical, empirical and typological approaches [20], [21].

Likewise, the study of the Qur'an associated with the study of religions is still partial and has not described the paradigm of the study of religions as desired by this study. For example, the study conducted by A. Muqsith Ghozali in his book Arguments for Religious Pluralism: Building Tolerance Based on the Quran, and Zuhairi Misrawi in his book Al-Quran Book of

Tolerance: Inclusivism, Pluralism, Multiculturalism. These last two books, in addition to not drawing the Quranic paradigm on the study of religions, are suspected of bringing a liberalization discourse in the study of the Qur'an which is part of Western Worldview's Infiltration in Quranic studies and religious studies in general in the Islamic world. In these last two books the pluralism discourse developed presupposes that the Qur'an adheres to a view of relativism that not only recognizes the existence of all religions but recognizes their truth at once. The Western paradigm that infiltrates Islamic thought including the study of the Quran is very dangerous because it is very contrary to the Islamic paradigm. Among the weaknesses of the Western paradigm are an absolute belief in reason, a dualistic view of reality and truth, secularism as a view of life and endless uncertainty [22], [23].

From the studies above, it can be said that there has been no in-depth study that describes the full paradigm of the study of religions in the Qur'an, which includes the meaning and concept of religion, the understanding and scope of religious studies, methods and approaches to religious studies, and the contribution of the study of religions [24].

## METHODOLOGY

The main source of this research is the mushaf al-Qur'an and the books of Tafsir al-Qur'an written by Indonesian music today, especially the book of Tafsir al-Mishbah by M. Quraish Shihab and Kitab al-Qur'an and Tafsirnya. Organizing Board of Qur'an Interpretation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. However, it does not rule out the possibility of looking at other books of exegesis as a complement or completion. In addition, supporting sources are index books or dictionaries of the Qur'an, ma'am al-Qur'an or classification of verses and content of the Qur'an, so that Qur'anic verses related to the theme of discussion can be found and collected, as well as books, journals and encyclopedias on the study of religions, both on religious research, comparative religion, history of religion, sociology of religion, anthropology of religion, psychology of religion, and books that talk about approaches Interdisciplinary in understanding religion [25]–[27].

**Table 1. Research Methodology**

Aspect	Description
Primary Sources	- Mushaf al-Qur'an - Tafsir al-Mishbah by M. Quraish Shihab - Tafsir al-Qur'an and its interpretation by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Indonesia)
Additional Sources	- Other tafsir books as complementary - Index books/dictionaries of the Qur'an - Ma'am al-Qur'an/classification of verses - Books, journals, encyclopedias on religious studies, including comparative religion, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and interdisciplinary approaches
Approach Used	Thematic (Mawdū'i) approach
Objective of Approach	To gather and analyze Qur'anic verses related to religion studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject
Methodological Basis	Based on the view of al-Farmawi: collecting related verses to address a specific problem in depth

The approach used in this study is thematic (mawdhu'i), although it does not pretend to be a mawdhu'i interpretation. As al-Farmawi argues, this method is intended to obtain the Qur'anic answer to a problem discussed in this case the study of religions. With this method, verses that have and contain the same material and problems are collected and processed to produce formulations that can provide a complete answer to a problem, namely the Qur'anic insight into the study of religions [28].

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After conducting a theoretical study on the Study of Religions with a systemic-anatomic approach, then using a qualitative analysis approach and content analysis, this study tries to formulate the paradigm of the study of religions from the perspective of the Qur'an as follows:

### Qur'anic Insights on the Meaning and Concept of Religion

With the help of al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfaz al-Qur'an, and several other Qur'anic indexes, this study has examined the main keyword religion (al-Dîn) with its various derivations, keywords that are adjacent in meaning to al-Dîn, and other keywords that have religious meaning contextually. From the study or all keywords can draw points or elements forming the meaning and concept of religion according to the view of the Qur'an, among others: With the help of al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfaz al-Qur'an, and several other Qur'anic indexes, this study has examined the main keyword religion (al-Dîn) with its various derivations, keywords that are adjacent in meaning to al-Dîn, and other keywords that have religious meaning contextually. From the study all keywords can be drawn as points or elements forming the meaning and concept of religion according to the view of the Qur'an, among others [29], [30].

The above elements show that the essence of religion according to the Qur'an is a notification from Allah through his messengers in the form of rules, laws, covenants, guidelines and directions of human life towards a better life, in this world and the future. However, at the same time, it is also a form of human life experience in expressing his encounter with God and the understanding and realization of his teachings, which live within the human cultural system. It can be said that the Qur'an shows al-Din as a revelation of Allah as well as human civilization characterized and directed by that Revelation [31], [32].

Religion in the view of the Qur'an, in the first dimension is a revelation, decree or edict of Allah to guide people towards an ideal life both in this world and in the Hereafter. So what is emphasized in this dimension is the divine dimension. Religion becomes highly idealized, normative, subjective as well as a sacred, absolute and universal "thing". Abdulah Darraz stated, "Religion is the law and teaching of God who leads the owner of common sense (man), to choose it to obtain the good of life in the world and happiness in the Hereafter or Religion is the law and teaching of Allah that guides man towards truth in width, goodness in morals and mu'amalah" [33].

The meaning of religion as above can be referred to as QS. Al-Shurâ/42:13; Ali 'Imrân/3:103; Al-Baqarah/2: 120, 147. These verses can be understood that the Qur'an hints at the understanding that religion is a guide, revelation, law and rule from Allah who is righteous. Because he is the real guide. From this it is also understood that religion (in the sense of being God's revelation) is not man's creation and fabrication, nor is it the result of human thought and interpretation [34].

In addition, the Qur'an also recognizes the existence of another dimension of religion, namely the dimension of humanity. It is in this dimension that the Qur'an gives a lot of criticism to the deviations made by human thought in understanding and practising religion. Religion in this dimension according to the Qur'an is sometimes in truth (QS. al-Baqarah/2:5), but sometimes in error (QS. Saba'/34:24). Religion when it is in human understanding, interpretation and thought then it is on the plain of civilization or culture. This is because the process that goes through is greatly influenced by space and time. In this context, the study of religions is in the area of historicity, because it involves issues of understanding, interpretation and thought that have relativity. However, the Qur'an gives signs, that those who try to understand religion with the intention of lillâhi ta'âlâ, then he will be in his guidance. Al-Ankabût/29:69). In this context the Prophet explained that those who have made maximum efforts in understanding religion because of Allah (ijtihâd) and are true then for him get two virtue values, while those who are wrong from his ijti had, then he still gets one virtue value [19].

Clearly, according to the Qur'an, the meaning and concept of religion includes both religion as revelation and religion as a process of civilization and civilization after struggling in the arena of human life. Religion as revelation is primary, while culture is secondary. Culture is an expression of religious life, so it is subordinate to religion, and not vice versa. Then religion is absolute, valid for every space and time, while culture is relative, limited by space and time [35], [36].

From the above analysis, it is increasingly clear that the concept of religion from the perspective of the Qur'an is very broad, encompassing the revelation of God and human understanding, thought and culture. Even kufr to Allah is seen as a religion or a proponent (QS. al-Kâfirûn/109:6). From this, the Qur'an shows the existence of Dîn al-Haqq which is the dînullâh conveyed through the Prophets and Messengers, their messengers, and of course Dîn al-Dhalâl which is the religion created by man himself or the distorted understanding, belief and practice of the religion of Allah. So the arrival of the Prophets and Apostles of Allah brought guidance and haqq religion, to win it over other religions that are dhalâl (QS. al-Tawbah/9:33, al-Fath/48:28, and al-Saff/61:9) [37].

### **Qur'anic Insights on Understanding the Study of Religions**

It is out of place to say that the Qur'an conducts the study of objects, including religions. Structurally, the revelation of God, which is the word of God, cannot possibly be studied or studied. However, functionally logically, it can be understood that the Qur'an has given a very clear signal to the study of religions. The Qur'an or Allah's revelation became a source of inspiration for religious studies, both as academic inspiration and spiritual religiosity. In this context, the Qur'an has insights and paradigms for the study of religions as a process of understanding (tafaqquh), which emphasizes more academic-scientific, societal and religious aspects and contexts themselves (theological) [26].

Therefore, the Qur'anic vision of the meaning of the study of religions is an effort and process of studying religions embraced by all mankind, both in the past, present, and even in the future for the process of understanding (tafaqquh) of an academic nature, and the process of social ethics, namely the growth of awareness to strengthen integration and minimize conflict, but has the ultimate goal of devotion and submission to God [38].

### **Scope of Study of Religions**

Mukti Ali suggests that religious studies examine the fundamental problems of each religion that will be answered according to the teachings of their respective religions, such as religious conceptions of man, conceptions of God, what is sin and merit, the relationship between belief and reason, the relationship between religion and ethics, the function of religion in society and so on [1], [2].

The Qur'an in discussing religions seems to emphasize more on the nature of religion, criticism of the concept of divinity, forms of worship, social systems, and the function of religion for humans. The nature of religion is explained by the existence of a religion that is haqq, namely the religion of God Himself and the religion of dalâl, namely the religions created by man that investigate the religion of Allah (QS. Yûnus/10: 32). The Qur'anic critique of the concept of divinity is directed at those who associate Allah either directly or indirectly. In addition to explaining forms of worship, such as prayer, fasting and other worship guidelines, both for Muslims and guidance that has been given to previous people, the Quran also describes forms of deviation from worship. Regarding the social system and the function of religion for human life, many are given in the form of social ethical signposts, and criticism of the deviation of a community from the teachings of his religion [39].

### **Qur'anic Insights on the Methods and Approaches of the Study of Religions**

As stated above, the Qur'an is a revelation or word of God in which it contains signals to readers and users about scientific studies including methods and approaches to conducting

scientific studies, in addition to its position as a guide and guide for human life. In general, the Qur'an shows that in discussing religions, it uses a descriptive-analytical method, which is to expose and elaborate the object of discussion for the reader to understand. The Qur'an became very communicative with its readers, both in terms of its function as a guide to life, as well as as a gesture of scientific development. Furthermore, the Qur'an also uses several approaches to the method, including a historical approach, critical approach, rational-intuitive approach, psychological approach, sociological approach, dialogical approach and theological approach [40].

#### Historical Approach

Quite a few verses of the Qur'an contain signs that invite the reader to see important events that have passed, which can be used as lessons (al-'ibrah wa al-ayat) for the next generation. The examples of the destruction of the people of 'Ad-Tsamud, 'Aikah and so on, the Qur'an commanded to be studied. Many more examples of good and evil have occurred on this earth (QS. Muhammad/47:10; Yûsuf/12: 109; Al-Fajr/89:6-14 et seq.). Historical research can be done by tracing history with existing data, from geology, archaeology and so on [41].

#### Critical Approach

The approach to criticism is shown by the Qur'anic statements about exposing the mistakes of the earlier people, especially the Ahl al-Kitab or Banu Israel, for example, criticism of the Jews for their bad attitude towards the Messenger sent to them, namely lying or killing (QS. Al-Maidah: 70-71). Criticism of Christians regarding their views and attitudes about God tends to condemn them (QS. al-Mâ'idah/5:72-74). The Qur'an also sharply criticizes the behaviour of religious leaders who pervert their leadership to eat the wealth of their people and accumulate their wealth, forgetting the struggle in the way of Allah. (QS. al-Taubah/9:31, 34) [42].

In addition, the approach to the study of criticism in the Qur'an is also hinted at by verses on (a) The command to perform al-nazir, reasoning and contemplation; (b) The command to perform al-basher, direct observation (observation); (c) The command to perform tadabbur (deep contemplation and thought); (d) The command to do tafakkur, think seriously; (e) The command to take i'tibâr, to learn from every event experienced, observed and understood (QS. al-A'râf/7: 185; al-Dharyât/51: 21; al-A'râf/7: 179; al-Nisâ'/4: 82; al-Mu'minûn/23: 68; al-Baqarah/2: 219) [43].

#### Rational-Intuitive Approach

Reason in the Qur'anic view is a combination of ratio and heart or taste. The intellect is the spiritual force for understanding truth, working by using the mind (al-Fikr) and al-Qalbu, both of which are organically related. The mind works to understand the physical dimension that is material, while the album works to understand the metaphysical, spiritual dimension. Both in the view of the Qur'an are a functional unity for culture, including research, study and understanding activities (QS. Ali-Imrân/3: 190-191).

In religious studies this approach is hinted at by QS. al-Nisâ'/4:82; Muhammad/47:24, with the terminology tadabbur. Tadabbur is the deep thought and contemplation of an object, involving ratio and intuition, in the language of the Qur'an involves the dimension of thought and the dimension of remembrance, even the whole potential to discover the ultimate truth. So in the study of religion, especially the Holy Bible, a tadabbur approach is needed [44].

#### Psychological Approach

The psychological approach is to approach religion through one's religious experience so that the main object is religious people. The Qur'an hints a lot about this psychological approach. The gesture is mainly indicated by the concepts of humanity developed by the Qur'an, for example, the concepts: insân, bashar, nafs, nâs, fitrah, qalb and so on. About religious studies, for example, the Qur'an shows that naps can have a range of activities from high-quality deeds (taqwâ) to the worst quality deeds (fujûr). (QS. al-Shams/91:7-8) [45].

From the other side the Qur'an also classifies nafs in al-Nafs al-Ammârah, al-Nafs al-Lawwâmah, and al-Nafs al-Muthmainnah (QS. Yûsuf/12:53; al-Qiyâmah/75:2; al-Fajr/89:27). Al-Nafs al-Ammârah encourages many bad deeds because it is filled with physical impulses and lustful impulses. Whereas al-Nafs al-Lawwâmah, is a soul who always longs for glory, he always regrets the bad deeds he has done, and for the good deeds he does not do much, and al-Nafs al-Mutmainnah, is a soul that firmly believes in the truth of Allah, does not mix in the slightest doubt, and stands tall above the laws of the Shar'i, is not tempted by shahwat, and is not swayed by (worldly) pleasures [46].

#### Sociological Approach

The sociological approach in the Qur'an is hinted at by concepts, such as qawm, ummah, jam'ah, mu'âmalah, khilâfah (imâmah), ukhuwwah (ikhwah) and so on. For example, QS. al-Baqarah/2:30 contains the elements that make up society, namely: (a) The human element; (b) The element of the earth or place and its environment; (c) The third element is the inner bond that binds man to the earth or nature on the one hand and to his fellow man on the other. This bond is called by the Qur'an by the term "caliphate" [47].

The Caliphate is not only a bond between man and nature and his fellow man, but also a bond between man and God. This is hinted at by the angel's statement "a taj'alu fihâ man outside fihâ wa yafiku al-dimâ' wa nahnu nusabihu bihamdika wa nuqadisulaka". This statement can intelligently be understood that the task of the Caliphate must be to realize the management and development of nature, realize the khutbah of humanity, and praise or draw closer to God [48].

#### Dialogical Approach

The dialogical approach in the study of religion is hinted at by the Qur'an as the invitation and encouragement of dialogue between communities or religious people in a better or better way. The dialogue includes theological dialogue as well as social and humanitarian dialogue. This approach is hinted at by the verses of QS. Ali 'Imrân/3:64; al-Ankabût/29:46, al-Nahl/16:125.

The verses above, affirm that religious dialogue is carried out with mujakan (وجداهم), that is, argumentative discussion by understanding religious issues both one's religion and the religion of others. The problem of divinity is indicated by the concepts of tauhîd and shirk, while the concept of humanity or society is indicated by the concept of equality among human beings, not to make fellow humans into God (arbâb) and about the ethics of dialogue itself [49].

#### Comparative Approach

The comparative approach is very prevalent in the statements of the Qur'an as stated in several verses among others QS. Ali 'Imrân/3:110, al-Ra'du/13:4, al-Lail/92:1-11. These verses are the embryo of a comparative approach. This comparative approach by the Qur'an is used to explain natural phenomena, as well as human phenomena, including human phenomena in religion. In the phenomenon of natural comparative studies attempt to uncover the secrets of nature from the basic principle (sunnatullâh) that occurs over two different or (even) contradictory things (QS. al-Ra'du/13: 4). While the other verse (QS. Alu 'Imrân/3:110 and Al-Lail/92:1-11) explain the comparison of each person's religious qualities. In another verse, there is also hinted at a comparative study between religions, in which the Qur'an states that each religion has different teachings, laws and regulations, and each religious community should compete with each other for good (QS. al-Mâ'idah/5:48).

The existence of religious plurality and religion is a sunnatullah (God's will), as a test for man in determining his attitude and commitment to God, and so that each other is competing for goodness. The end of verse 5:48 states that Allah will eventually point out also matters that are disputes between religious people. This means that it contains a signal for people to examine the differences and similarities of each religion, to go to common ground and compete in upholding virtue [14].

## The Qur'anic Vision of the Purpose and Significance of the Study of Religions

In theoretical studies, a very exciting debate was found between the school that argues that the study of religion is a pure science that should not be related to various interests other than the interests of science itself, and values, and the school that argues that the study of religions has goals and functions, namely: maturation and broadening of views in understanding one's religion and the religion of others, The cultivation of tolerance and mutual respect between various religions, and more than that, the study of religions will encourage the creation of harmonious relations between religious believers based on moral values derived from each religion [50].

The Qur'an in every discussion of religions indicates a certain purpose and significance. For the Qur'an, the study or discussion of religions is carried out for several purposes, including:

### Scientific Understanding or Development (Tafaqquh)

The discussion of religions by the Qur'an, if studied more deeply, has the aim of providing broad insight for readers about the religions around it. The provision of this insight in Qur'anic terms is called *al-Ibrah wa al-I'tibâr* (learning and taking lessons) and *Tafaqquh* (deepening-understanding). This gesture is indicated by the verses: QS. Ali 'Imrân/3:13; al-Tawbah/9:122).

The first verse indicates that different religious phenomena need to be studied and examined to become *Brah*. *Ibrah* has a meaning: lessons, knowledge or insights which at the epistemological stage are processes of understanding and searching for knowledge, but at the axiological stage means practical lessons and guidelines in dealing with life. The form of birth presented in this first verse is a comparative approach, which is to present two or more figures who are different from each other to study their respective similarities and differences [4].

The second verse, on the other hand, hints that there needs to be a group of people who truly *Tamaqua* (deepen) their religious knowledge. *Tafaqquh fi al-Dîn*, not only at the level of academic thought and understanding but must be followed up with the mission of the *Ummah*, in this case, to give a warning to the *Ummah* to be more vigilant and take care of themselves. Giving a warning can also be interpreted again as the delivery of knowledge that has been in him before [51].

Thus, the study of religions from the Quranic perspective has a scientific mission that at epistemological stages requires intellectual freedom, openness and tolerance, but at the axiological stages must be useful for the improvement of human life.

### Sociological-Ethical

What is meant by the sociological-ethical mission here is a goal that leads to the interests of humanity, especially in the context of a life of togetherness in society, which is related to the interaction of life between groups covered with ethical values adequate for the order of plural life.

The discussion of religions that encourage the study of religions also has a mission to realize a harmonious society, with its various pluralities, especially religious pluralism. This is hinted at by verses that give guidance on (1) The ethics of dialogue (QS. al-Nahl/16:125, al-Ankabût/29:46 et seq.); (2) Verses on tolerance (QS. al-Mumtahanah/69:7-9, al-Kâfirûn/109:1-6); (3) Verses on invitations to meeting points between religions, and verses on religious freedom and prohibitions against disturbing or damaging places of worship of other people's religions. (QS. Ali Imrân/3: 64; QS. al-Baqarah/2:256, al-Hajj/22:40) [48].

### Theological

The theological benefits of the study of religions for Muslims have already been suggested by Mukti Ali. Among the benefits that are useful to Muslims, according to him, is that knowledge of other religions can be revealed in terms of the advantages of Islam over other religions and that the religions brought by the previous prophet are an introduction to the

broader and more important truth of Islam. By comparing Islam with other religions, there will be sympathy for those who have not been instructed by the truth of Islam, thus giving rise to a sense of responsibility to broadcast the truth of Islam to the public. However, the deepening of other people's religions can also pose a great danger to Islam, if it is wrong to use it, and it can also be a great help to Islam if it is correct in using it.

However, respecting Mukti Ali's views above, this study offers a new formulation of the theological mission of the study of religions in the Qur'an. The theological mission of the Qur'an in discussing religion is hinted at by verses that refer to al-Dīn al-Islāmī, and Aqīdah al-Tauhīd states unequivocally that those who are religious other than Islam, and deviate from aqīdah tauhīd so that they will not be safe and lose in the Hereafter (QS. al-Baqarah/2: 208, Ali Imrān/3: 19, 85, al-An'ām/6: 19, al-Kahf/18: 110, al-Hajj/22:34). The Qur'an also affirms that the Messenger of Allah was sent with guidance and dīn al-Haqq (the religion of Islam) was to be superior, perfecter and substitute for all existing religions (QS. al-Tawbah/9:33, al-Fath/48:28, al-Saff/61:9) [52].

### **Analysis of M. Quraish Shihab's Thought on Religious Studies from a Qur'anic Perspective**

This research highlights a crucial effort to systematize the Qur'anic paradigm of religious studies, primarily through the lens of M. Quraish Shihab's tafsir, particularly al-Mishbah. Utilizing a thematic (mawḍū'ī) approach, the study explores how the Qur'an defines, discusses, and offers methodologies for understanding religions. The methodology is rich and interdisciplinary, encompassing textual interpretation, content analysis, and insights from comparative religion, anthropology, sociology, and theology. Central to the analysis is the dual nature of religion (al-Dīn) in the Qur'an: as divine revelation (absolute and sacred) and as human understanding of that revelation (relative and historical). This distinction is essential in comprehending the Qur'an's perspective, where religion is both transcendental and embedded in human culture. While revelation remains constant and universal, human reception and interpretation vary across time and space.

The Qur'anic paradigm upholds both the uniqueness of Islam (as Dīn al-Haqq) and the recognition of religious plurality as part of divine will (sunnatullāh). This plurality is not an endorsement of relativism but a call for mutual understanding, dialogue, and moral competition in goodness. Shihab's interpretation supports a vision of Islam that is confident in its theological foundations while also open to respectful dialogue with others. Methodologically, the Qur'an employs several approaches that are relevant to contemporary religious studies: historical, psychological, rational-intuitive, critical, sociological, dialogical, and comparative. These methods suggest that religious inquiry, from a Qur'anic perspective, is multifaceted and meant to foster both intellectual depth and spiritual growth. This comprehensive framework aligns with SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by promoting religious literacy and interfaith harmony.

The purpose of studying religion according to the Qur'an includes not only academic enrichment (tafakkuh) but also sociological-ethical and theological functions. It seeks to foster tolerance, ethical coexistence, and a sense of mission rooted in tawhīd. The study also warns against the Western secular paradigm that tends to detach religion from divine guidance, reducing it to a mere object of scientific curiosity. In contrast, the Qur'an integrates epistemology with spirituality, affirming the transformative power of religious knowledge when aligned with divine intent. In summary, the study provides a robust model of Qur'anic religious studies through the interpretive lens of Quraish Shihab. It not only bridges classical scholarship with modern interdisciplinary thought but also reinforces the Qur'an's relevance in addressing contemporary challenges in religious diversity and pluralism.

## **CONCLUSION**

The real religion is the revelation of God delivered to his Prophets and Apostles, which serves as a guide and direction for human life in this world to lead to eternal life, the hereafter.

Religion in this sense is sacred and absolute. However, the process of understanding, appreciation and internalization of religion or human impressions and beliefs on the power seen as God is also included in the category of religion. Even disbelief in the religion of Allah is incorporated into religion or religion. Religion in such a sense is profane, relative, and tentative. The concept of religion in the Qur'an, in various senses above is termed al-Din, and al-Millah. At the same time, religion in the sense of rules is called al-Shir'ah or al-Sharī'ah, al-Minhāj, al-Habl and other similar terms. The study of religion from the perspective of the Qur'an is the study of religion, both in the first sense and the second meaning. The existence of truth claims, so to speak, is in the realm of basic ideas and religious substance that are based on al-Islām or al-Istislām (submission, obedience, and submission in totality to Allah), and tawhid (single and total commitment only to Allah). The study of religions in the view of the Qur'an besides being scientific, also socio-ethical and theological. This is in contrast to the study of religions developed by the West, which solely uses the scientific method, and is scientific so that only to fulfil the scientific profession alone, it does not touch the social, ethical and theological dimensions. Regarding the significance and significance of the study of religions from the perspective of the Qur'an, the author can say here that this study has a very important position and role, both for the development of insight and understanding of mankind towards its religion and the religions of others, it is also very important in realizing harmonious relations again harmony between religious people based on a deep understanding of the similarities and differences of each. It can even realize a competitive life together in realizing the welfare of living together. It is not a pseudo-harmony, brought about by a superficial understanding and appreciation of religion. The study of religion is also very important to purify one's religion from the things that pollute it. Thus, the core of true religion (Dīn al-Haqq) namely al-Islām or al-Istislām billāh and Tauhīdullāh as taught by the Qur'an and Sunnah as al-Risalah al-Akhirah and the finishing treatise of the previous treatises can stand in the life of mankind. Wa fawqa kulli dzi ilmin 'alim.

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### Author Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the main contributor to this paper, all authors read and approved the final paper, and all authors declared no conflict of interest.

### Conflicts of Interest

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

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