The Paradigms of Interfaith Dialogue in The Qur'an

Hamidi Ilhami
Universitas Islam Negeri Antasari Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, Indonesia
hamidiilhami@uin-antasari.ac.id

Abstract

This article aims to present an interpretation on several verses of the Qur'an relating to interfaith dialogue. Interfaith dialogue become very urgent and significant because it is a form of reconciliation in the religious pluralism. The Qur'an as a holy book of Islam certainly does not ignore this. There are at least four paradigms for developing interfaith dialogue, namely the awareness of differences; the freedom of religion; the universality of truth; and the doctrine of Qur'anic Supersessionism as a legitimacy of the existing previous religions.

Keywords: *Interfaith dialogue, the Qur'an, and pluralism*

Introduction

Since the 20th century until now, one of the most widely intellectual discussions is discourse of interfaith dialogue. The term of dialogue in this context does not mean only a conversation between two or more people in exchanging the values owned by each party, but also includes the association between individuals to open up to each other and try to get to know each other in order to create harmony, peace and constructive cooperation.

In fact, there are still many Muslims who are reluctant to engage in dialogue with other religious followers (interfaith dialogue), even for social interaction, they are rigid and sensitive. Though in concept, the discourse of interfaith dialogue has been highly developed, even leading to the formulation of "universal theology", a concept that considers all religions are basically the same.

In the perspective of "universal theology", religion is a manifestation of human consciousness about the Ultimate Reality (God) and human experience in dealing with Him, symbolized by the diversity of words by the human languages themselves. This diversity is caused by human limitations in expressing religious awareness and experience. But essentially religions as manifestations of human religious awareness and experience actually have a fundamental similarity. This argument is the basis for "universal theology".[1]

According to A. Mukti Ali, some Muslims do not consider interfaith dialogue as

---

[1] M. Din Syamsuddin, "Agama-Agama Dunia: Masalah Interaksi dan Convergensi" in Komaruddin Hidayat dan Ahmad Gaus AF (ed.), *Passing Over Melintasi Batas Agama*, Jakarta: PT. Gramedia, 1998, 216-217.

an important issue in the development of contemporary thought on religions because they believe that their religion is the only one that contains truth. This is the reason why dialogue with other religious followers is not important. He also added that the issue of interfaith dialogue became even more controversial among some Muslims because they knew that the Christians was the first to bring up the idea of interfaith dialogue. According to their beliefs, the idea of interfaith dialogue emerged due to the failure of missionary efforts in preaching the gospel in earlier times, so the Christians try to use new methods by issuing the means of interfaith dialogue as a way to establish communication.[2] Besides, the negative response of some Muslims to interfaith dialogue seems to be caused by their insecurity and fears. In their opinions, many cases of conversion are a result of compromise or dialogue with other religions.

Since 14 centuries ago, the Qur'an as the holy book of Islam has guided its believers in carrying out a dialogue with other religious followers (interfaith dialogue). However, it seems that the Qur'anic guidance on the interfaith dialogue has not been revealed clearly. This, of course, is one of the reasons why some Muslims become an anti-interfaith dialogue.

This paper tries to reveal some paradigms of interfaith dialogue in the Qur'an with the method of *Tafsir Maudhu'iy* (thematic interpretation), which compiles verses from various suras in the Qur'an that together discuss the same issue, then the verses are placed in a thematic discussion.[3] The term paradigm in this context means how to think (mode of thought) or how to research (mode of inquiry) or how to know (mode of knowing).[4] So, the meaning of paradigms of interfaith dialogue in the Qur'an is the Qur'anic teachings in conducting interfaith dialogue taken from understanding the verses.

Understanding the Interfaith Dialogue

Significance of Interfaith Dialogue

There are at least two reasons for the importance of interfaith dialogue. *First*, because of sociological development, globalization and information has occupy all aspects of human life, then the Earth has been transformed into people's rooms without partition which certainly bring up what is called pluralism, including religious pluralism. Komaruddin Hidayat called religious pluralism as *sunnatullah* (the law of history), because in his opinion, the core of religiousity is the result of a consciousness and open mind, and as a subjective relationship between a person and his God. So, the understanding of pluralism religious behaviour becomes necessary.[5]

Second, because of humanity, as we see it today, modern civilization has appeared in two antagonistic faces. On one hand, modern civilization has succeeded in creating spectacular advancement, especially in the fields of science and technology and physical prosperity. On the other hand, it has also led to the life of secularism, materialism, and

---

[2] A. Mukti Ali, "Agama, Moralitas dan Perkembangan Kontemporer" in Mukti Ali, et all., *Agama dalam Pergumulan Masyarakat Kontemporer*, Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana. 1998, 7-8.

[3] Abd al-Hayy al-Farmawiy, *Metode Tafsir Maudhu'iy*, Jakarta: PT. RajaGrafindo Persada, 1996, 35-36; M. Quraish Shihab, *Wawasan Al-Qur'an*, Bandung: Mizan, 1999, xii-xiii.

[4] Kuntowijoyo, *Paradigma Islam Interpretasi untuk Aksi*, Bandung: Mizan, Cet VIII, 1998, 327.

[5] Komaruddin Hidayat, 1998, *Tragedi Raja Midas*, Jakarta: Paramadina, 1998, 179.

individualism, which caused various moral and human problems arise. People lose their spiritual element and do competition at a high tempo, so then they trap in a hard and unfriendly life. As a result, social pathologies increase in the communities such as robbery, murder, human rights violations, and so on.

Lately, religions are seen as giving a new face to modern civilization with all its problems. This assumption is of course only mere rhetoric if religions appear individually and are busy dealing with conflicts between adherents. For this reason, interfaith dialogue is needed so that religions should be functioned in solving the problems of humanity.

This fact, of course, forces us to increase our maturity in dealing with differences and broaden our religious understanding, so that differences do not cause conflict, but become cultural and political assets. Interfaith dialogue seems to be quite relevant and conducive in this context as Frederick J. Streng called it the reconciliation of religious plurality.[6]

The Conception of Interfaith Dialogue

Dialogue is a conversation between two or more people who have different views about an issue. The main objective is so that each party can understand the other party and have broad and developing knowledge and insight. In dialogue, each party must be willing to listen to the other party openly and attentively because the dialogue requires each party to understand the other's position as precisely as possible, and it is not impossible if to be honest, one party will find the other's position so convincing, then accept it. So, dialogue is not just a debate whose sole purpose is to defeat the other party.[7]

A. Mukti Ali added that dialogue also means concourse, which is running or moving together. It is not only talking to each other.[8] In conclusion, interfaith dialogue is dialogue between two or more followers of different religions, in which exchange of values and religious information of each party is held to achieve a form of cooperation in the spirit of harmony.[9]

There are some basic guidelines on interfaith dialogue designed by Leonard Swidler, as follows:

1) The purpose of interfaith dialogue is to increase knowledge by developing insights and understanding of reality which is then carried out appropriately.

2) The interfaith dialogue must come from two parties, each of whom is a religion.

3) Each party in the interfaith dialogue must be honest and sincere. Besides, each party must also assume the other party is honest and sincere.

4) In the interfaith dialogue, it is not allowed to compare concepts with practice. The discussion should compare the concept with the concept, or practice with practice.

5) Each party in the interfaith dialogue must position themselves according to their existence. This means that a Muslim must stand as a Muslim, he must not stand on behalf of Christians or other people.

---

[6] Frederick J. Streng, *Understanding Religious Life*, California: Wadsworth Inc., 1985, 237-238.

[7] Leonard Swidler, "The Dialogue Decalogue; Ground Rulers for Interreligious, Interideological Dialogue" dalam *Jurnal Al Jami'ah*, No. 57, 1994, 141.

[8] A. Mukti Ali, "Agama, Moralitas dan Perkembangan Kontemporer" in Mukti Ali, et all., *Agama dalam Pergumulan Masyarakat Kontemporer*, Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana. 1998, 8.

[9] D. Hendropuspito, *Sosiologi Agama*, Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1990, 175.

6) Each party in the interfaith dialogue is not justified to have an assumption to look for differences but must try to agree with the other parties as long as the integrity of their beliefs is maintained.

7) The interfaith dialogue can only be carried out in a balanced position. This means that each party is equally to share knowledge. If a Muslim, for example, views another party below him or his neighbour, the dialogue is not possible.

8) The interfaith dialogue can take place based on mutual trust. It means that each party wants to dialogue and meet the requirements for it. People who do not understand their religion, for example, cannot enter into dialogue.

9) People who intend to participate in the interfaith dialogue at least have a critical nature of themselves and their religion. So, he is well aware that himself and diversity still needed improvement.

10) Each party in the interfaith dialogue must try to live the other party's religion or belief deeply. Because to understand religion properly, one must pass over into that religion, and then return brightly, full of experience and depth.[10]

Field and Forms of the Interfaith Dialogue

The interfaith dialogue contains three operational fields. *First*, the interfaith dialogue in praxis. In this case, the interfaith dialogue usually takes the form of life dialogue, that is, people from various religions and beliefs live in togetherness in a community together, or it can also take the form of social activities, in which religious adherents try to collaborate to solve humanitarian problems. *Second*, interfaith dialogue in a spiritual plane. In this case, interfaith dialogue can take the form of communication of religious experience of each religion, or it can also be in the form of joint prayer. *Third*, interfaith dialogue in cognitive terrain. In this case, interfaith dialogue takes the form of a theological discussion in which the religious adherents exchange information about their beliefs, beliefs and practices of their respective religions and try to seek mutual understanding with the mediation of the discussion.[11]

Levels of Interfaith Dialogue

Dialogue can be carried out on three levels. *First,* the level of knowledge and knowing each other among adherents of different religions, because of the feeling of mutual respect and respect between them. *Second*, the level of effort to observe each other's differences in values that are believed by different adherents of each religion with the hope of seeking an adjustment to oneself. *Third*, the level of efforts to find and uncover new areas of reality and truth that have not been revealed before as a result of the dialogue. By maintaining integrity and openness in exchanging opinions, opportunities for assimilation are beneficial for both parties.[12]

---

[10] Leonard Swidler, "The Dialogue Decalogue; Ground Rulers for Interreligious, Interideological Dialogue" dalam *Jurnal Al Jami'ah*, No. 57, 1994, 142-144.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] Zaini Muchtarom, "Bagaimana Mencermati Dialog?" in Abdurrahman, et all. (ed.), *70 Tahun H. A. Mukti Ali, Agama dan Masyarakat*, Yogyakarta: IAIN Sunan Kalijaga Press, 1993, 483.

The Qur'an talks about Some Principles on the Interfaith Dialogue

The Awareness of Differences

A dialogue occurs because of differences. This also the reason for the conflict. There is no dialogue or conflict without differences. In the other words, dialogue and conflict are twin brothers born from a mother named difference. However, a dialogue is a good and virtuous child, while conflict is a naughty and destructive child.

In this context, the differences mean identically with the term of diversity or pluralism, namely the state of the existence of several groups in a country or society that has differences, both in terms of ethnicity or culture or religion or in terms of others. In other words, pluralism is a diverse situation.[13]

The era now is the era of pluralism. It can be seen in the phenomena that surround us, culture, religion, race, education, nation, state and political aspirations, all of which show a pluralistic face. According to M. Amin Abdullah, pluralism has existed since long ago, but the image of pluralism in the past was not as clear as it is now. It is the result of modern technology in the field of transportation and communication that makes this pluralism increasingly lived and understood by many people wherever they are.[14]

Anselm Kyongsuk Min also said that as a social reality, pluralism is a fact that has been going on for a long time (ancient fact).[15] Therefore, it is not surprising to say that pluralism is a reality that cannot be avoided. Pluralism is a historical fact. Pluralism is a law of nature (*sunnatullah*). Pluralism is as old as human age and will exist forever. Denying pluralism is denying oneself.

According to the Qur'an, the differences or pluralism is the will of Allah as well as divine creation or provision that He has established (Q.S. Hud: 118). Rasyid Rida understands the Qur'anic verse which states that Allah intends to create the differences in humans mean that nature or human nature is different in all respects.[16] This is in line with the opinion of Alwi Shihab who said that the differences or pluralism are natural provisions (order of nature).[17] Imam al-Ghazali said, as quoted by Muhammad Imarah, that how could humans unite to listen, even though they are set to be different by Allah.[18]

The essence of diversity or pluralism according to the Qur'an is as nature (nature inherent naturally) for all humans. Allah has made humans different. In other words, that human nature is different, whether in physical form, thought, or action.

Thus, in the perspective of the Qur'an, diversity or pluralism is not just something permissible or a kind of human rights, but more than that, namely as something that must be believed. To deny diversity means to deny the verses of Allah. To deny diversity is to deny yourself.

---

[13] Victoria Neufeldt (ed.), *Webster's New World College Dictionary*, USA: Macmillan, 1996, 1040.

[14] M. Amin Abdullah, Falsafah *Kalam di Era Postmodernisme*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, Cet. II, 1997, 105.

[15] Anselm Kyongsuk Min, "Dialectical Pluralism and Solidarity of Others Toward a New Paradigm" dalam *Jurnal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 63 No. 3, 1997, 592.

[16] Muhammad Rasyid Ridha, *Tafsir Al-Manár*, Juz 12, Beirut: Dar al Fikr, 193.

[17] Alwi Shihab, *Islam Inklusif*, Bandung: Mizan, 1999, 56.

[18] Muhammad Imarah, *Islam dan Pluralisme*. t. Abdul Hayyie Al Kattanie, Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 1999, 35.

Therefore, the most important thing now is how people should behave toward differences or diversity or pluralism which is the will of Allah or the nature of humanity itself? Because as said above, the differences or pluralism, in addition to giving birth to dialogue that is very beneficial for the survival of life, can also give birth to very detrimental conflicts.

For the Qur'an, diversity means the necessity for each individual, community or nation so as not to insult each other (Q.S. al-Hujurat: 11). Instead, they should open up to each other, learn from each other's culture and engage in dialogue by listening to each other's opinions and taking what is best. These are some ways taken by people who get affection from Allah (Q.S. al-Zumar: 18).

Besides, the differences or pluralism should also be a motivator to compete, encourage and compete among individuals and society through thoughts and philosophy in the various civilization, so that life becomes more dynamic (Q.S. al-Maidah: 48). So, diversity in this context is a motivator for creativity, as well as mutual encouragement in the field of progress and improvement of civilization.

The Qur'anic verse which states that at first, humans were "one religion", then they separated because of the tyranny between them, (Q.S. Yunus: 19; Q.S. al-Baqarah: 213) seems that it can be a constant unity of values and unifying principles among different parties. Because the meaning of "one religion" in the verse, according to Nurcholish Madjid, it refers to a kind of creature that is human, and that human has different nature.[19] So, the meaning of "one religion" is the awareness of unity as a kind of human that is always different. With this kind of awareness, a disunity can be avoided. Otherwise, the denial of the unity of human types are always different will lead to opposition.

For this reason, in the context of religious pluralism, interfaith dialogue means an awareness of the diversity of religions by their respective tendencies. In this context, interfaith dialogue is also defined as the exchange of ideas, both theoretical and praxis, which are formulated in different ways.

Religious Freedom

One form of the awareness of difference or diversity is that each person or group is given the freedom to "live". An individual or group does not necessarily force the other to be in line with it. He must allow the individual or group of individuals to choose something that they consider their own, as he or she is free to choose something according to their inclinations. This is because the human nature is created with something special, namely *rūh*,[20] hearing, sight, and conscience/mind, (Q.S. al-Sajadah: 7-9) so that humans have full consciousness and the ability to choose (Q.S. al-Insan: 3). Therefore, coercion against an individual or group, even in the name of truth, is contrary to the humanity itself. When one can coerce another person in the name of truth, so do the other person. Because each one is forcing the will, then what emerges is not the truth, but conflict.

Only with freedom, says Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, humans can act on the moral part of God's will. The human essence is defining its capacity to take responsibility for moral

---

[19] Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban*, Jakarta: Paramadina, 1992, 179-181.

[20] Machasin, *Menyelami Kebebasan Manusia*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1996, 119-120.

actions. Coercion is a violation of freedom and responsibility and is completely contrary to human relations with God's will.[21]

Choosing religion, for example, is the right of every individual because it is basically a conscious relationship between a servant and his God. The freer a person is in his relationship with his Lord, the more he will be able to feel the presence of God and the deeper the religious values he has. Thus, religion will become more alive and useful in life. On the other hand, the more one is forced to convert to a religion, the more he does not understand the religious values. It means that the further he goes from the benefits of the religion itself, the more religious it becomes. Religion is easily a tool of political legitimacy. In the end, religion is nothing more than a tool of oppression for rulers and a symbol of ignorance for the people.

Therefore, according to Ismet Natsir, freedom of religion is not just the right to choose or to change religion, but most importantly for the development of human resources and the building of the religion itself, both constitutionally, the building of understanding and creative thinking. As a result, in the absence of religious freedom, religious organizations have hardly flourished. Religious life has become barren and frozen, with no meaningful contribution. These bad portraits often refuse to be looked at so when it comes to religious rights, what immediately appears to be the face of fear; fear of diminishing followers, fear of expansion of other religions, fear of this and fear of it. In such situation, the problem would be difficult to put on the table for analysis.[22]

Meanwhile Azhari Noer argues that fear is a mirror of shakiness (weakness of faith) and openness/freedom is a mirror of strength (strong faith). Belief in a person's faith/religion is evident when he dares to deal with others who are different from him.[23]

For Muslims, such fears are unnecessary. The Qur'an itself does not justify coercion in religion since humans are generally able to distinguish between right and wrong (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 256). Even in the Qur'an, Allah once rebuked His Prophet Muhammad when he sought to compel all men to follow him (Q.S. Yunus: 99). Thus, the Qur'anic instructions are very clear that one's choice of religion should be based on voluntary, not forced, physical or suggestive forms of his manifestations.

The Qur'an affirms, which can easily be understood as a sense of religious freedom, that who believes then believe, while who denies then resist (Q.S. al-Kahfi: 29). However, that choice should be accounted for. It means that if the choice is good then it will have its advantages, if it is bad, then the consequences will be its own (Q.S. Yunus: 108).

Thus, it can be said that if each religious follower had given himself and others freedom of choice in religion, there would have been no conflict between religions. On top of that, there will be a democratic, honest, open, critical and dynamic attitude toward religion. In this context, the interfaith dialogue will operate on its own, not only to create harmony or tolerance but also to understand each other's position as a vehicle for learning,

---

[21] Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths*. USA: The Islamic Foundation and The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1998, 307.

[22] Ismet Natsir, "Ruang Gerak Kebebasan Beragama di Indonesia" in Komaruddin Hidayat dan Ahmad Gaus AF (ed.), *Passing Over Melintasi Batas Agama*, Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1998, 126.

[23] Kautsar Azharinoer, "Passing Over' Memperkaya Pangalaman Keagamaan" in Komaruddin Hidayat dan Ahmad Gaus AF (ed.). *Passing Over Melintasi Batas Agama*, Jakarta: PT Gramedia. 1998, 265.

enriching, enriching or deepening religious experience and finding deeper meaning in their lives.

The Universality of Truth

It is natural for a religious person to claim that the religion he holds is the correct one. Religion without being accompanied by claims of truth on it has no meaning. Religion without claims of truth is like a fruitless tree. Religion without any claims of truth that Whitehead called dogma, or by Fazlur Rahman called normative (transcendent aspect), then religion as a form of life (a distinctive form of life) will not have the symbolic power that can attract followers.[24]

However, the claim of truth of religion that is believed by someone should not deny the religion of others, let alone it is followed by coercion of the will until it becomes radicalism, extremism, and even terrorism. According to the Qur'an, the truth is universal. It means that the truth is not limited by time and space so that the truth is available to anyone, anywhere and at any time.

As one example, the Qur'an states that religion is accepted in the sight of Allah is al-Islam (Q.S. Ali Imran: 19). In another verse, it is stated that who adheres to a religion other than *al-Islam*, then his religion will never be accepted and in the Doomsday, he will be among those who suffer loss (Q.S. Ali Imran: 85).

According to Ibn Taymiyyah, as quoted by Nurcholish Madjid, the word *al-Islam* implies *al-istislam* (= submission) and *al-inqiyat* (= submissive and obedient) and also contains the meaning of *al-ikhlash* (= sincere). In this context, it must be inevitably an attitude of surrender to God and leave surrender to other than Him. From this point of view, it can be understood that adhering to a religion other than *al-Islam* or that is not accompanied by an attitude of surrender and surrender to God is a wrong attitude. Even though sociologically and formally a person is Muslim, but if there are no al-Islām values, then he also belongs to the wrong religious category.[25]

In line with the opinion of Nurcholish Madjid, Muhammad Abduh and Rasyid Ridha said that a true "Muslim" is those who avoid the taint of shirk that associates partners with God but do charity based on sincerity and submission to God anywhere and at any time and at any time and from any religion.[26]

The meaning of true religion is a religion that has the values of *al-Islam* (in the sense of submission and surrender only to God), actually related to the nature of humans to serve or worship. The problem is to what or whom humans serve or worship. If that desire is not heard properly and correctly, it will lead to misery, which is to prevent people from obtaining their dignity. That is why humans must serve and worship only God, the Absolute who has no comparison or equivalent. Thus, al-Islam is an embodiment of channelling human instincts and natural desires to serve and worship towards the right target of worship and in the right way, so that it has the right consequences as well.[27] Therefore, in fact, every

---

[24] M. Amin Abdullah, *Studi Agama Normativitas atau Historisitas ?*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar. 1996, 49.

[25] Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban*, Jakarta: Paramadina, 1992, 181-182.

[26] Muhammad Rasyid Ridha, *Tafsir Al-Manár*, Juz 3, Beirut: Dar al Fikr, 257.

[27] Nurcholish Madjid, "Dialog Agama-agama dalam Perspektif Universalisme *al-Islám*" in Komaruddin Hidayat dar Ahmad Gaus AF (ed.), *Passing Over Melintasi Batas Agama*, Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1998, 10-13.

religion that has the values of al-Islam, which is an attitude of submission and submission only to God, then that religion is true, even from the jinn (Q.S. al-Jin: 14).

Universal truth are also taken by the Qur'an when responding to the confession of Jews and Christians (*Ahl al-Kitab*) who claim that only those who enter Paradise, (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 111) and they will never go to hell at all, (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 80) and even among the two religious communities were involved in a polemic to bring each other down (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 113). The Qur'an refutes their claim by using universal arguments, that all people are obedient and submit only to God and do good, there is no worry and sadness for them (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 112). On the other hand, whoever sins and is not aware of it, that person goes to hell (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 81).

In another verse, the Qur'an once again makes a general and universal argument, in response to the confession of Jews and Christians who claim to be the most loved one's God. In this case, the Qur'an says that they are also human beings. Allah treats equally humankind, while forgives or tortures whom He wants (Q.S. al-Maidah: 18).

Universal attitudes also appear when the Qur'an responds to the claims of Jews and Christians whom each says that the Prophet Ibrahim is from their group. Prophet Ibrahim, as stressed by the Qur'an, is not from a Jewish or Christian group, but he is a man who is obedient and submissive only to Allah, not to others (Q.S. Ali Imran: 65-67).

This universal attitude, as recorded by the Qur'an, was also practised by the Prophet Musa along with his followers (Jews) and the Prophet Jesus along with *al-Hawâriyyin* (Christians), when they are confronted by those who rejected them. Firmly they say that they are people who submitted and surrendered only to Allah SWT (Q.S. Ali Imran: 52; Q.S. Yunus: 84).

Therefore, through the Qur'an, Allah gives guidance to the Prophet Muhammad along with Muslims, so that when they faced people who oppose them, it must be with a universal attitude by saying: "We are people who submit and surrender to Allah only." (Q.S. al-Ankabut: 46).

Thus several verses of the Qur'an that can be used as an example in connection with the claim of truth in every religion. Truth, according to the Qur'an, is universal, not partial. Even if all religions are aware of this, the meeting point of religions will be easily identified, and this will certainly lead to constructive interfaith dialogue.

The doctrine of Qur'anic Supersessionism

In the history of religions, it is almost certain that every religion born was preceded by the previous religion, and in every religion that came later, there is always a claim as a substitute for the previous religion. That is, of course, difficult to be accepted by the adherents of the earlier religions. Doctrinal-theological beliefs that claim that the religion that came later functions to abrogate or shift the previous religion is what is called the doctrine of supersessionism.[28]

In the history of Semitic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), for example, Jews were the first to be irritated and angry over the claims of Christians who considered

---

[28] Komaruddin Hidayat, "Membangun Teologi Dialogis dan Inklusif" in Komaruddin Hidayat dan Ahmad Gaus AF (ed.), *Passing Over Melintasi Batas Agama*, Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1998, 40.

that the coming of Isa or Jesus means ending the existence of the validity of Judaism. The spirit of supersessionism has driven Christians to support the Nazis in Germany in the Second World War that killed thousands of Jews.[29]

When the Prophet Muhammad declares himself to be the messengers of Allah also felt as ending the previous religions. In the Qur'an, it is clearly illustrated the objections of the adherents of previous religions, especially Jews and Christians towards the arrival of Islam (Q.S. al-Baqarah: 120).

Islam has so far benefited from the absence of claims of the emergence of new religions that have had great success. Normatively, this reality is certainly related to the Qur'anic doctrine which says that the Prophet Muhammad are the last Prophets and Apostles, closing the Prophets and Apostles (Q.S. al-Ahzab: 40).

Historical facts and statements of the Qur'an are proof that the Prophet Muhammad is truly the last prophet and apostle in the prophetic and apostolic series throughout the religious history of humankind, and certainly the religion that the Prophet Muhammad brought is the last and most adequate and perfect religion.

According to Fazlur Rahman, some Muslim modernists believe that the religion brought by the Prophet Muhammad along with its sacred book made humans considerably have reached rational maturity and therefore there is no need for the revelation of Allah. However, because humanity is still experiencing moral confusion and cannot keep up with the rapid progress of science, to be consistent and meaningful, this argument must be added with that one's moral maturity depends on his constant struggle to find guidance from the holy books that Allah has revealed, especially the Qur'an.[30]

The problem now is the arrival of Islam either aimed to erase all previous religions or not. The Qur'anic statement regarding the status of Muhammad as the last prophet and apostle use the term "*khâtam*" (*khâtam al-nabiyyin*), which according to Nurcholish Madjid, means literally as a ring, refers to a document ratification ring. In fact, that is the function of Muhammad is to validate the truth of the previous holy books and the religious teachings of the prophets and messengers of God before.[31]

Many verses of the Qur'an states that its functions as a justification and an explanation of the previous holy books (Q.S. Yunus: 37). So, it is very clear that the Qur'an explicitly, and at the same time, also implicitly gives legitimacy or endorsement of the previous holy books.

Legitimacy or ratification of the Qur'an toward the previous holy books means some points, as follows: *First*, as the affirmation that adherents of the previous religions especially Judaism, Christianity and who are classified as *Ahl al-Kitab*, are justified in practising their religious teachings correctly and in earnest; *Secondly*, that the Qur'an supports the basic truths of the teachings of previous religions, but also examines them from possible deviations by their adherents because of certain interests.

---

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] Fazlur Rahman, *Tema Pokok Al-Qur'an*, t. Anas Mahyuddin, Bandung: Pustaka, 1983, 118-119.

[31] Nurcholish Madjid, "Konsep Muhammad SAW Sebagai Penutup Para Nabi: Implikasinya dalam Kehidupan Sosial serta Keagamaan" in Budi Munawar Rachman (ed.), *Kontekstualisai Doktrin Islam Dalam Sejarah*, Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995, 528.

So, the arrival of the prophet Muhammad does not shift the existence and do the abrogation of the validity of previous religions, but to teach about the continuity of God's religions, as well as teachings about the development of God's religions from time to time. The continuity and consistency of teaching is evidence of the authenticity, validity and truth of the teachings of Islam.

Such understanding is as stated by Abul Kalam Azad, that the Qur'an never asks the followers of other religions to accept the Qur'an as their new faith or belief. On the contrary, the Qur'an demands that they return to their pure religious teachings by throwing away additional beliefs that have tainted their religions, reviving and remaining faithful to the original religion. When they do, the purpose of the Qur'an is fulfilled. If they returns to their original religion, then they will find what is contained in the truth is entirely the same as what is proposed by the Qur'an.[32]

Conclusion

From the description above, conclusions can be drawn:

1. The interfaith dialogue is something very urgent and significant because it is a reconciliation of religious pluralism. It is expected that there will be exchange of values and religious information between followers of different religions to achieve a form of cooperation in the spirit of harmony. Thus religion becomes functional and can be empowered as it should.

2 The Qur'an as the holy book of Islam certainly discusses the problem of interfaith relations, because it reveals amidst people who have embraced the previous religion. There are at least four paradigms or principles taught by the Qur'an to build interfaith dialogue, namely: awareness of differences, freedom of religion, universality of truth and the doctrine of Qur'anic supersessionism as legitimacy for previous religions.

Bibliography

Al-Qur'an al-Karim.

Abdullah, M. Amin. Falsafah *Kalam di Era Postmodernisme.* Yogayakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, Cet.II, 1997.

_____. *Studi Agama Normativitas atau Historisitas ?.* Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1996.

Ali, A. Mukti. "Agama, Moralitas dan Perkembangan Kontemporer" in Mukti Ali, et all. *Agama dalam Pergumulan Masyarakat Kontemporer.* Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 1998.

_____. "IImu Perbandingan Agama; Dialog, Dakwah dan Misi" in Burhanuddin Daya, et all., (redaktur), *Ilmu Perbandingan Agama di Indonesia dan Belanda.* Jakarta: INIS, 1992.

Azad, Abul Kalam. *Konsep Dasar Al-Qur'an.* t. Ary Anggari. Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus. 1991.

Azharinoer, Kautsar. "Passing Over' Memperkaya Pangalaman Keagamaan" in Komaruddin Hidayat dan Ahmad Gaus AF (ed.). *Passing Over Melintasi Batas Agama.* Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1998.

---

[32] Abul Kalam Azad, *Konsep Dasar Al-Qur'an*, t. Ary Anggari, Jakarta, Pustaka Firdaus, 1991, 155.

Farmawiy, Abd al-Hayy al-. *Metode Tafsir Maudhu'iy*. Jakarta: PT. RajaGrafindo Persada, 1996.

Faruqi, Ismail Raji al-. *Islam and Other Faiths*. USA: The Islamic Foundation and The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1998.

Hendropuspito, D. *Sosiologi Agama*. Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1990.

Hidayat, Komaruddin. "Membangun Teologi Dialogis dan Inklusif" in Komaruddin Hidayat dan Ahmad Gaus AF (ed.), *Passing Over Melintasi Batas Agama*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1998.

_____, *Tragedi Raja Midas*, Jakarta: Paramadina, 1998.

Imarah, Muhammad. *Islam dan Pluralisme*. t. Abdul Hayyie Al Kattanie, Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 1999.

Kuntowijoyo. *Paradigma Islam Interpretasi Untuk Aksi*. Bandung: Mizan, Cet. VIII, 1998.

Machasin. *Menyelami Kebebasan Manusia*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1996.

Madjid, Nurcholish. "Dialog Agama-agama dalam Perspektif Universalisme al-Islám" in Komaruddin Hidayat dan Ahmad Gaus AF (ed.). *Passing Over Melintasi Batas Agama*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1998.

_____. "Konsep Muhammad SAW Sebagai Penutup Para Nabi: Implikasinya dalam Kehidupan Sosial serta Keagamaan" in Budi Munawar Rachman (ed.). *Kontekstualisai Doktrin Islam Dalam Sejarah*. Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995.

_____. *Islam Doktrin dan Peradaban*. Jakarta: Paramadina, 1992.

Min, Anselm Kyongsuk. "Dialectical Pluralism and Solidarity of Others Toward a New Paradigm" in *Jurnal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 63 No. 3, 1997.

Muchtarom, Zaini. "Bagaimana Mencermati Dialog?" in Abdurrahman, et all. (ed.). *70 Tahun H. A. Mukti Ali, Agama dan Masyarakat*. Yogyakarta: IAIN Sunan Kalijaga Press, 1993.

Natsir, Ismet. "Ruang Gerak Kebebasan Beragama di Indonesia" in Komaruddin Hidayat dan Ahmad Gaus AF (ed.). *Passing Over Melintasi Batas Agama*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1998.

Neufeldt, Victoría (ed.). *Webster's New World College Dictionary*. USA: Macmillan, 1996.

Rahman, Fazlur. *Tema Pokok Al-Qur'an*, t. Anas Mahyuddin. Bandung: Pustaka, 1983.

Ridha, Muhammad Rasyid. *Tafsir Al-Manár*. Juz 3 dan 12. Beirut: Dar al Fikr, t.th.

Shihab, Alwi. *Islam Inklusif*. Bandung: Mizan, 1999.

Shihab, M. Quraish. *Wawasan Al-Qur'an*. Bandung: Mizan, 1999.

Streng, Frederick J. *Understanding Religious Life*. California: Wadsworth Inc., 1985.

Swidler, Leonard, "The Dialogue Decalogue; Ground Rulers for Interreligious, Interideological Dialogue" in *Jurnal Al Jami'ah*, No. 57, 1994.

Syamsuddin, M. Din. "Agama-Agama Dunia: Masalah Interaksi dan Convergensi" in Komaruddin Hidayat dan Ahmad Gaus AF (ed.). *Passing Over Melintasi Batas Agama*. Jakarta: PT. Gramedia, 1998.