

RETHINKING RELIGIOUS MODERATION THROUGH THE STUDY OF INDONESIAN EXEGESIS: A STUDY OF TAFSIR AL-AZHAR BY HAMKA

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Abstract: *Realizing religious moderation is the President's medium-term program for 2020-2024. This program was entrusted by the President to the Ministry of Religion. The Ministry of Religion through the moderation team formulates indicators of religious moderation. There are four indicators in the moderation of the Ministry of Religion, one of which is tolerance. Tolerance by the Ministry of Religion is defined as being open, generous, voluntary, and gentle in accepting differences. Tolerance is always accompanied by respect, accepting different people as part of ourselves and positive thinking. This tolerance is then divided into two parts: inter-religious and intra-religious. The hope of tolerance between religions is the emergence of attitudes towards adherents of other religions, a sense of willingness to dialogue, cooperate, establish places of worship, and experience interacting with adherents of other religions. On the other hand, Hamka is one of the Indonesian Muslim scientists who has phenomenal commentary works and has been widely studied in Asia, especially Indonesia. Hamka grew up in an era of political upheaval both at home and abroad had a big impact on the concept of thinking which was then poured into his work. This article aims to examine Hamka's views on other religions, especially Judaism, examine more deeply whether there is a Jewish/ Zion conspiracy or not, and analyze Hamka's acceptance of other religions. Equipped with a library research method with a descriptive-analytic-critical analysis as a guide in this article. From this it was found that in the Hamka interpretation it is contrary to the concept of religious moderation of the Ministry of Religion, in the Hamka interpretation there are many suspicions against Jews even though the discussion of the Protocol of Zion according to observers is a conspiracy, fictitious, and has no valid evidence. In addition, Hamka is included in the category of exclusive Muslims who do not accept religions other than Islam Muhammadanism.*

Keywords: *Religious Moderation; Tolerance; Ministry of Religion; Hamka; Tafsir al-Azhar*

Introduction

Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (1908-1981), better known as Hamka, was one of the prominent Muslim intellectuals from Sungai Batang, West Sumatra, Indonesia. In the Asian region, Hamka is recognized as a revolutionary thinker and religious figure. One of his remarkable works is the book titled "Tafsir al-Azhar," where he provided his commentary on the Quran. Growing up and developing during the 20th century, Hamka had his own distinctive approach in interpreting the Quran. The political upheavals in the world had a significant impact on the thought process of Quranic commentators, including Hamka. The independence of Israel in 1948 stirred emotions among Muslims, which then found expression in written works, eventually contributing to the field of Quranic exegesis.

Indonesia, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama), has a significant agenda of religious moderation. To achieve this, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has implemented various programs, ranging from research scholarships to training for Civil Servants (ASN) under its jurisdiction. One recent step taken by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in December 2022 to prevent the spread of radical ideologies is conducting a survey among all of its ASN using the Computer Assisted Test for the Professional Index and Religious Moderation. This step is crucial, considering that Indonesia protects six official religions and beliefs, as stated in the Indonesian constitution.

According to the author's opinion, achieving religious moderation and harmony among different religious communities only requires one thing: eliminating suspicion towards other religions. Eliminating suspicion towards other religions is a crucial issue that is challenging to achieve. This is because the doctrines of all religions have claimed exclusivity and salvation lies solely in their own faith. Additionally, the concept of missionary work is inherent in many religions, particularly the Abrahamic ones.¹ This has led to the emergence of racist attitudes and sentiments towards followers of other religions, often referred to as Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and anti-Americanism. To address the problem of religious racism, various theories of unity have emerged, such as relativism, pluralism, multiculturalism, and others.

In Indonesia, the majority of citizens are Muslims. As a result, the holy book of the Quran greatly influences the ideology and way of life for its people, both in this world and the afterlife. One undeniable aspect in Islam is that the Quran contains verses that emphasize the importance of showing love and compassion towards all human beings. However, the Quran also commands followers to be firm, fight, be cautious, and at times be suspicious, even going as far as ordering Muslims to fight against non-Muslims.

The interpretation of the Quran by commentators, known as *mufasir*, has further complicated matters. Non-Muslim scholars, especially Jews, consider it essential to remove verses from the Quran that may contain racist elements towards Judaism. The reason for this call for removal is that, according to Israel Shrentzel's observation, the understanding and interpretation of the Quran by Muslims from classical times to the present have remained resistant to change and unwilling to accept any alterations.² Urgent action is needed to remove racist verses to foster religious harmony among different communities.

¹Muhammad Muhammad, "Yahudi Di Indonesia: Analisis Interpretasi Nawawi Al-Bantani Dalam Kitab Marḥ Labḥ," *AL QUDS: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis* 6, no. 2 (September 28, 2022): 887, doi:10.29240/alquds.v6i2.4298.

²Israel Shrentzel, "Verses and Reality: What the Koran Really Says about Jews," *Jewish Political Studies Review* 29, no. 3/4 (2018): 25–39, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26500684>.

The Jewish religion and its followers have often suffered from ill-fated circumstances. This can be evidenced by historical facts, as the oldest religious racism issue is anti-Semitism. Not only facing discriminatory attitudes, but often being associated with conspiracy theories related to world domination, such as the creation of a new world order propagated by unseen elders of Zion or the Illuminati. This conspiracy theory has led to the anticipation and presumption among the majority of followers of other religions, including Christians, Catholics, and Muslims, that Jewish adherents are evil people living among society.³ Research by Jovan Byford in 2011 found that a significant portion of the human population believes in the truth of this conspiracy theory.⁴

It becomes intriguing to investigate Hamka's perspective in his works when discussing Jews and Zionists. The fundamental reason for choosing Hamka's exegesis in this article is Indonesia's aspiration to achieve religious moderation, and one key aspect of religious moderation is eliminating suspicion towards followers of other faiths. Judaism is one of the growing religions in Indonesia.⁵ Hamka's exegesis is among the many interpretations studied at universities, particularly in the field of Quranic studies and exegesis. However, if this exegesis work shows signs of racism or suspicion towards followers of other religions, it could potentially influence the perspectives of Quranic studies and exegesis graduates in Indonesia.

After conducting in-depth research on previous studies, it can be confirmed that there are no discussions about the Illuminati in Hamka's "Tafsir al-Azhar." Although numerous studies have examined Hamka's thoughts, they mostly focus on the methodology of interpretation, moderation, non-Muslim leaders, the influence of al-Manar's exegesis on Hamka's interpretation, and educational principles. Hence, it is evident that this article contains discussions that present a novelty not previously explored by researchers.

Method

Specifically, this article discusses Hamka's comments on Jews as mentioned in the Quran. As it is well known, the Quran contains numerous verses that explicitly mention Jews and even more verses that imply references to the Jewish community. From these verses, two different perspectives towards Jews can be found,

³Marc David Baer, "An Enemy Old and New: The Dönme, Anti-Semitism, and Conspiracy Theories in the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 103, no. 4 (2013): 523-55, doi:10.1353/jqr.2013.0033.

⁴Jovan Byford, *Conspiracy Theories and Their Vicissitudes* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 38. <https://doi.org/10.3167/fcl.2011.600101>.

⁵Ali Hamdan, Zaenul Mahmudi, and Muhammad Muhammad, "Anti-Semitism Pada Penafsiran M. Quraish Shihab Terhadap Ayat-Ayat Tentang Yahudi Dalam Tafsir Al-Misbah," *AL QUDS: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis* 7, no. 1 (2023): 121-36, doi:10.29240/alquds.v7i1.5331. Lihat juga, Muhammad, "Yahudi Di Indonesia: Analisis Interpretasi Nawawi Al-Bantani Dalam Kitab Marḥ Labḥ."

encompassing both positive and negative aspects. Hamka, who lived during turbulent political eras, particularly the Israel-Arab conflict, was influenced to some extent in his views when providing comments on Quranic verses related to Jews, especially those that pertain to their negative aspects. Reassessing Hamka's comments in his exegesis "Tafsir al-Azhar" regarding his suspicion towards Jews is the focal point of this article. This is followed by an analysis of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' aspirations in achieving religious moderation in Indonesia. Towards the end of the article, the possibilities of religious moderation from the perspective of the Ministry of Religious Affairs are compared with Hamka's comments about the Jewish community. As a result, potential avenues for religious moderation can be identified as long as Hamka's exegesis continues to be consumed by Indonesian society.

Furthermore, this article employs qualitative research methodology with sources derived solely from pure literature, including books and scholarly articles. The sources used in this article are divided into two categories: primary and secondary sources. The primary sources in this article consist of Hamka's "Tafsir al-Azhar" and the book "Moderation in Religion" from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. On the other hand, secondary sources include books and recent journals that discuss religious moderation and studies on Hamka's exegesis. After gathering the data, it is analyzed using a descriptive-analytic approach. By doing so, a comprehensive understanding can be obtained regarding the presence or absence of suspicion and racism in Hamka's work towards followers of other religions. If suspicion and racism towards followers of other religions are detected, then Hamka's exegesis contradicts the concept of religious moderation. The benchmark for measuring religious moderation in Hamka's exegesis is the concept of religious moderation from the perspective of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The Ministry's perspective on religious moderation in Indonesia consists of four indicators: 1) national commitment, 2) tolerance, 3) non-violence, and 4) accommodation of local culture.⁶ The focus of this analysis is on the second indicator, tolerance, which serves as a measure to identify the presence or absence of religious moderation in Hamka's "Tafsir al-Azhar."

Result and Discussion

Four Indicators of Religious Moderation by the Ministry of Religious Affairs

The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia carries out the task of promoting religious moderation based on the constitution. There are four indicators for religious moderation established by the Ministry. Firstly, based on Article 29, paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution. Secondly, in accordance with Law No. 39 of 1999 on Human Rights, Article 22, paragraph (2). Thirdly, pursuant to Presidential Regulation No. 83 of 2015 concerning the Ministry of Religious Affairs,

⁶Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019), 43.

Article 2. Fourthly, outlined in Presidential Regulation No. 18 of 2020 on the National Medium-Term Development Plan for 2020-2024, Annex III. Fifthly, stated in Presidential Decree No. 18 of 2020 on the Ministry of Religious Affairs Medium-Term Strategic Plan for 2020-2024, Annex I. Lastly, outlined in the Decision of the Director-General of Islamic Guidance No. 570 of 2020 concerning the Medium-Term Strategic Plan of the Directorate General of Islamic Guidance for 2020-2024.

Since religious moderation is a program under the President's Medium-Term Development Plan entrusted to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and it is targeted to be realized by the year 2024, the Ministry of Religious Affairs takes the necessary steps to achieve this goal. In October 2019, the Ministry of Religious Affairs published its first book discussing religious moderation. This was followed by the release of another book in December 2020 by the Ministry's Working Group on Religious Moderation, presenting a roadmap for strengthening religious moderation titled "Peta Jalan (Roadmap) Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Tahun 2020-2024" (Roadmap for Strengthening Religious Moderation for 2020-2024). Subsequently, in 2021, more books discussing religious moderation with collaboration from the Ministry of Religious Affairs were published. The latest book, officially published in February 2022, is titled "Moderasi Beragama Perspektif BIMAS Islam" (Religious Moderation from the Perspective of Islamic Guidance). This can be seen as an elaboration on the book published in 2019.

There is a clear similarity between the books on religious moderation published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 2019 and 2022 concerning the indicators of religious moderation. The Ministry of Religious Affairs, through these books, emphasizes that the maturity of a country's democracy can be measured by the extent of tolerance within its society. The higher the tolerance towards differences, the more democratic the nation tends to be. Tolerance, as an indicator of religious moderation, is defined as the attitude to provide space and not interfere with others' rights to have beliefs, express their beliefs, and voice their opinions, even if they differ from what we believe. Tolerance in this context refers to an open, broad-minded, voluntary, and gentle attitude in accepting differences. Tolerance always goes hand in hand with respect, accepting those who are different as part of ourselves, and having a positive mindset.⁷

This tolerance is then equated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs with the Arabic term "*tasāmuhīyah*," which is defined as the attitude of respecting the different or opposing beliefs of others.⁸ Furthermore, at the end of the discussion on tolerance, it is emphasized that differences should not be a cause for worry or conflict. Instead, one should follow what is considered right according to their own beliefs, without judging or blaming others. Such judgment should never be accompanied by insults

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ditjen Bimas Islam Kementerian Agama, *Moderasi Beragama Perspektif Bimas Islam*, ed. Dedi Slamet Riyadi (Jakarta: Sekretariat Ditjen Bimas Islam Kementerian Agama, 2022), 115.

and condemnation.⁹ Tolerance is divided into two parts: inter-religious and intra-religious. Inter-religious tolerance can lead to attitudes such as willingness to engage in dialogue, cooperation, supporting the establishment of places of worship, and interacting with followers of other religions. On the other hand, intra-religious tolerance aims to deal with minority sects perceived as deviating from the mainstream of a religion.¹⁰

The notion of tolerance introduced by the Ministry of Religious Affairs can be seen as a breakthrough to strengthen the relationship among Indonesia's diverse citizens, both culturally and religiously. Indonesia itself has various religions and beliefs, although the constitution officially recognizes six major religions. Furthermore, there are emerging religious sects spreading throughout Indonesia, such as the Ahmadiyah and Shia sects within Islam, among others. Hence, it is crucial to implement the concept of tolerance, both inter-religiously and intra-religiously, to foster harmony and unity among the people of Indonesia.

According to some Islamic studies observers, the emphasis on tolerance by the Ministry of Religious Affairs is reasonable, given that Islam dominates Indonesia, constituting around 86% of the population. Abdulaziz Sachedina once theorized that "when Muslims are the majority, the Quranic verses emphasize tolerance and minorities will enjoy it under Islamic political leadership. When Muslims become a minority, the Quranic verses are interpreted to advocate armed resistance against non-Muslim powers and to act intolerant towards non-Muslims."¹¹

If Sachedina's theory is correct, it would explain the imbalance found in the research on religious moderation in Indonesia, where there are more studies from the perspective of Islam than from non-Muslims. The Ministry of Religious Affairs itself has published a book titled "Moderasi Beragama Berlandaskan Nilai-nilai Islam" (Religious Moderation Based on Islamic Values) in June 2021, written by Abdul Aziz and A. Khoirul Anam. However, concerns arise whether Sachedina's theory is also used by non-Muslims, leading to a reversed understanding where tolerance is preached when non-Muslims are the majority and strategies for attacking are adopted when they become the minority. Such suspicions could undermine the values of religious moderation in Indonesia.

Furthermore, the characteristic of Abrahamic religions cannot be separated from missionary activities. Missionary work is evident in Indonesia, with major religions competing to recruit new members. Due to the nature of missionary work, conflicts and a sense of superiority and correctness often arise. The issue of missionary work, a characteristic of major religions, has not been adequately addressed in the Ministry of Religious Affairs' concept of tolerance. The Ministry

⁹Ibid, 188.

¹⁰RI, *Moderasi Beragama*, 44.

¹¹Abdulaziz Sachedina, "Advancing Religious Pluralism in Islam," *Religion Compass* 4, no. 4 (2010): 221-33, doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2010.00207.x>.

tends to employ multicultural theory, which has not fully resolved inter-religious conflicts. After in-depth observation, one theory that could resolve religious conflicts is religious pluralism. However, this theory is not accepted by orthodox followers. According to Anis Malik Thoha, the concept of religious pluralism remains a political discourse. The Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) also explicitly rejects religious pluralism and considers it a mistake, as stated in the fatwa 7/MUNAS VII/11/2005 on Pluralism, Secularism, and Religious Liberalism.

The attitude of tolerance offered by the Ministry of Religious Affairs still remains unclear, particularly from the explanation of "accepting people who are different as part of ourselves and thinking positively." Focusing on the phrase "thinking positively" may have negative side effects, as in Islamic sources that are not tafsir (interpretations), there are verses that lead to a negative perception of followers of other religions. With the explanation of "thinking positively" from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, what about the verses that promote negative perceptions? Have these verses been decided as "mansukh al-Ḥukm" (abrogated) or categorized as verses that have lost their relevance, or are they considered irrelevant in Indonesia? This issue, too, becomes a separate concern.

Furthermore, when considering the interpretations of Muslim intellectuals in Indonesia, who mainly draw from sources in the Middle East that are saturated with conspiracy theories against followers of other religions, especially Jews.¹² Religious interpretations disseminated in Indonesia with such conspiracy theories have become ingrained and are believed to be true by the majority of Indonesian Muslims. This echoes what Jovan Byford described in his article "Conspiracy Theories and Their Vicissitudes": "Discrediting Jews by portraying them as evil people living among society is an issue believed to be true by a significant portion of the population."¹³

As an illustration, in the West, especially America, after the 9/11 tragedy, Qur'anic interpretations that contain elements of conspiracy were removed from libraries, such as Sayyed Quṭb's interpretation "*fi dhilāl al-Qur'an*," as explained by Fawaz Gerges in his work "Making the Arab World."¹⁴ If the Ministry of Religious Affairs wants to achieve tolerance completely, as described in the version of religious moderation by the Ministry, it is essential to sort out works with a Quṭbiyah nuance. It must be acknowledged that one of the works of Islamic intellectual interpretation in Indonesia that is indicative of Quṭbiyah influence is Hamka's interpretation.¹⁵

¹²Bassam Tibi, "From Sayyid Qutb to Hamas: The Middle East Conflict and the Islamization of Antisemitism," in U: Small, Charles A. (Ur) *The Yale Papers: Antisemitism in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Charles Asher Small (New York: ISGAP, 2015), 457-83, <https://isgap.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Yale-Papers-Complete-071315-Reprinted.pdf#page=467>.

¹³Byford, *Conspiracy Theories and Their Vicissitudes*, 38.

¹⁴Fawaz Gerges, *Making the Arab World*, vol. 15 (Princeton University Press, 2018), 18. doi:10.1515/9781400890071.

¹⁵M. Munawan, "A Critical Discourse Analysis Dalam Kajian Tafsir Alquran: Studi Tafsir Al-Azhar Karya Hamka," *TAJ DID* 25, no. 2 (August 21, 2018): 155, doi:10.36667/tajdid.v25i2.303.

Hamka adopted the concept of Jahiliah (pre-Islamic ignorance) from Qutb, which, according to observers, has been a source of emergence of many Muslim extremists.¹⁶ It is not only the concept of Jahiliah from Qutb that is present in Hamka's interpretation, but also the many claims of Jewish conspiracies, which researchers consider to be fictitious news, are found in his interpretation.¹⁷ Claims portraying Jews as Shylock, the belief that Jews and Zionists aim to disrupt the world's socio-economic system, dominate and control the banking system, the political arena, and the media are often present in "Tafsir al-Azhar."

The Concept of Religious Tolerance in Hamka's Perspective: Perspectives from Researchers

Before delving into the discussion of the Jewish conspiracy in Hamka's interpretation, this paper first examines the views of researchers on the concept of religious tolerance from Hamka's perspective in the work "Tafsir al-Azhar." This discussion is important to explore the similarities and differences between Hamka's concept of tolerance and that of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. By understanding Hamka's concept and limits of interreligious tolerance, a progression of understanding regarding the emergence of the Jewish conspiracy in Hamka's work can be traced.

It cannot be denied that many scholarly articles have attempted to explore the concept and limits of tolerance in "Tafsir al-Azhar." There are Quranic verses that serve as the foundation for declaring Hamka's perspective on tolerance. These verses include Surah al-Fatihah 1:1, al-Baqarah 2:62, 256, al-An'am 6:108, Yunus 10:99-100, Kahf 18:29, Luqman 31:15, al-Shurah 42:15, al-Hujurat 49:13, al-Mumtahanah 60:7-9, and al-Kafirun 109:1-6. Based on these verses, researchers of Hamka's interpretation formulate Hamka's stance on tolerance with keywords such as fairness, goodness,¹⁸ balance, honesty, bravery, wisdom, brotherhood, following the right path,¹⁹ love, care, respect, and upholding peace.²⁰

Surah al-Fatihah, which is one of the foundations cited by researchers regarding Hamka's perspective on tolerance and the comments Hamka provides in

¹⁶Sayed Khatab, "Hakimiyah and Jahiliyah in the Thought of Sayyid Qutb," *Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 3 (July 8, 2002): 145-70, doi:10.1080/714004475.

¹⁷Chiara Volpato and Federica Durante, "Empowering the 'Jewish Threat': The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," *Journal of US-China Public Administration* 6, no. 1 (2009): 23-37. Lihat juga, Daniel Greene, "The Plot: The Secret Story of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion (Review)," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 25, no. 3 (2007): 186-88, doi:10.1353/sho.2007.0070.

¹⁸Wahyu Pebrian, "Toleransi Dan Kebebasan Beragama Menurut Hamka Dalam Tafsir Al-Azhar" (Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi, 2019), 73-98.

¹⁹Abdur Rauf, "Interpretasi Hamka Tentang Ummatan Wasathan Dalam Tafsir Al-Azhar," *Qof* 3, no. 2 (2019): 161-77, doi:10.30762/qof.v3i2.1387.

²⁰Citra Cahaya Nugraha, E. Tajuddin Noor, and Taufik Mustofa, "Menanamkan Sikap Toleransi Pada Masyarakat Multikultural Dalam Perspektif Tafsir Al-Azhar," *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan* 5, no. 2 (2021): 745-51, doi:10.33487/edumaspul.v5i2.1799.

"Tafsir al-Azhar," does not have any connection to tolerance. There seems to be a forced interpretation. The understanding of Hamka's commentary on this verse is more focused on the illustration of the Essence of Allah, where primitive people initially considered Allah to be frightening and arrogant. Hamka emphasizes that Allah is not like that, but rather Allah is compassionate and merciful. The discussion of *rahman* and *rahim* by Hamka is more directed towards the understanding that Muslims should always start their good deeds by reciting these attributes, as doing so facilitates reaching their goals. From this, it becomes evident that the researchers' understanding of tolerance in Hamka's interpretation is misinterpreted. Another proof of this is that Hamka's commentary on the verse primarily justifies the God worshipped by Muslims (Allah) and criticizes the deities of other religions.

As an example of Hamka's commentary:

When we Muslims mention God, we mean Allah. The Self-Existing Being, to whom we seek everything, uncreated and not giving birth, and there is nothing comparable to Him, not even a single particle. But when Christians mention God, they mean Jesus Christ. Sometimes it gets mixed up; because according to their doctrine, God is the 'Trinity' or the 'Triune'.²¹

Incomplete readings occurred when researchers explored the concept of Hamka's tolerance based on Surah al-Baqarah 2:62. Researchers of Hamka's concept of tolerance explain that in his interpretation, Hamka provides opportunities for the truth of other religions,²² he hopes for peaceful coexistence and advocates unity among followers of different religions, and that heaven belongs to all, not exclusively to Muslims.²³ Concerning this verse, Hamka does not delve into the circumstances of revelation (*asbab al-Nuzul*), so the first impression when reading Hamka's interpretation leads to the assumption of religious pluralism. However, the clear point of Hamka's commentary can be seen on page 207, paragraph 2, until the end of the commentary on that surah. On page 207, paragraph 2, Hamka explains:

When they have united in seeking the truth and belief, then the followers of all religions will eventually meet at one point of truth. The distinctive characteristic of that point of truth is surrendering with sincerity to the One Allah; that is Tawhid, that is sincerity, and that is Islam! To better understand the meaning of this verse, let us observe how many people who originally followed Judaism or Christianity in this modern age then converted to Islam.²⁴

From this, it can be understood how researchers misinterpreted the passage and assumed religious tolerance or even narrowed it down to Hamka's version of religious pluralism. The point of convergence of truth advocated by Hamka is the

²¹Abdul Malik Abdul Karim Amrullah, *Tafsir Al-Azhar* (Singapura: Pustaka Nasional PTE LTD, 1982), 1/68.

²²Khoirul Ulum, "PLURALITAS BERAGAMA Prespektif Buya Hamka Dalam Tafsir Al-Azhar," *Samawat* 2, no. 2 (2015): 1-12.

²³Pebrian, "Toleransi Dan Kebebasan Beragama Menurut Hamka Dalam Tafsir Al-Azhar.," 102.

²⁴Amrullah, *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, 1/207.

truth of Islam, Muhammadanism, and only those who go astray do not follow Muhammadanism. Therefore, Hamka reinforces his interpretation:

So, the person who claims belief in Allah should not reject the coming of the Last Prophet and Messenger (Prophet Muhammad) nor reject the revelation that he brought. Jews and Christians should have believed in the prophethood of Muhammad once they have received information about him. And by doing so, they have truly submitted (Muslim) to God. But if the information has reached them, and they still reject it, then the Hellfire will be their place.²⁵

From this, it can be confirmed that there are no points of tolerance, moderation, let alone religious pluralism in Hamka's interpretation. The principles of tolerance, moderation, and pluralism remove exclusivity that justifies personal beliefs and acknowledges respect for other beliefs. This is what can be observed from Hamka's interpretation.

Furthermore, the most frequently used verse to describe Hamka's moderate and tolerant attitude in his tafsir is Surah al-Baqarah 2:256. Researchers of the concept of moderation and tolerance claim that from Hamka's commentary, he appears to be very tolerant, as expressed by Nurlina and Busro, "Islam as a mercy to the worlds does not force others' will in matters of opinion, seeking knowledge, or even in matters of religion." This argument arises after reading Hamka's explanation, "as beings endowed with intellect, humans must be able to determine how their intellect is used to choose the truth and abandon the path of error."²⁶ Similarly, it is expressed by Miftahul Jannah and Jufryadi Sholeh, who state that Hamka said, "this verse (al-Baqarah 2:256) is one of the verses that is worthy of being a guide for humanity in all religions." "Allah has commanded His people not to compel anyone to embrace Islam, but merely invite them to contemplate."²⁷

The understanding of Hamka's tafsir is clearly mistaken. Hamka does not endorse any religion other than Islam after the sending of Muhammad as a Prophet and Messenger. The misunderstanding of Hamka's commentary, which has been done by researchers, focuses only on fragments of comments and does not fully comprehend the context. They do this merely to justify their own arguments rather than seeking the truth from the arguments of the figure they are studying. However, when studying without any bias or purpose of justifying personal arguments, the

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶N Nurlina and B Busro, "The Concept of Religious Tolerance in Indonesia According to Buya Hamka in Tafsir Al-Azhar," in *Gunung Djati Conference Series*, vol. 4, 2021, 467-79, <https://conferences.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/gdcs/article/view/378%0Ahttps://conferences.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/gdcs/article/download/378/197>. Butuh diperhatikan, dalam artikel ini terjadi kesalahan penyebutan nomor surah al-Qur'an. Terletak pada halaman 474 mencantumkan arti ayat al-Qur'an surah al-Baqarah. Ditulis dengan ayat ke-265, padahal yang tepat arti tersebut merupakan arti dari surah al-Baqarah ayat ke-256.

²⁷Miftahul Jannah and Moh Jufriyadi Sholeh, "Kebebasan Beragama Dan Berbicara Dalam Bingkai Kajian Tafsir Nusantara," *REVELATIA: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 2, no. 1 (June 14, 2021): 48-58, doi:10.19105/revelatia.v2i1.4366.

beginning of Hamka's commentary on this verse can be found. From the beginning, Hamka explains that to understand the meaning of verse 256, one must first understand verse 255, as these two verses form a unity. Hamka explains the key to understanding verse 256 in his commentary:

Verse 255 explains the essence of Islamic teachings about Tawhid. The Tawhid described in Ayat al-Kursi includes the concept of complete Oneness of God that is in line with the fitrah (natural disposition) of humans. Therefore, if a person's heart is sincere and not influenced by blind imitation of ancestors or coercion from religious leaders, they will naturally accept the information from Ayat al-Kursi. That is why in verse 256, it is explained that among the right path and the wise way, there is a clear difference from the wrong path. Thus, there is no need to force anyone. As long as a person is willing to reject the influence of false gods from within and continues to believe in Allah, they will accept the truth without any need for coercion. Forcing people to adopt a belief, even if it is incorrect, is nothing but following false gods (*thaghut*). This is what we will observe in the subsequent verses and interpretations.²⁸

The mistake of the researchers on religious tolerance and moderation in Hamka's work becomes evident from the above comment by Hamka. It is clear that Hamka does not endorse any teachings other than Islam Muhammadanism. Those who do not follow Islam Muhammadanism are considered to be following the beliefs of their ancestors and contaminated by the false beliefs of religious leaders (*thaghut*). In essence, a person with intellect must believe in and follow Prophet Muhammad as the last Prophet and adhere to his teachings. Anything contrary to that is considered wrong and misguided.

One of the verses frequently used to support the concept of religious tolerance in Hamka's commentary is Surah Al-Hujurat 49:13. Mufid Muawaffaq, for instance, explains that from this verse, Hamka cautions readers not to seek out differences that ultimately lead to disputes among themselves. According to Muawaffaq, this verse serves as a strong foundation for exploring Hamka's perspective on diversity.²⁹ Real differences should not be an issue that needs to be debated; rather, differences should not be seen as a threat but as an opportunity to respect and honor one another.³⁰ From Hamka's commentary on the verse, the conclusion also emerges, emphasizing the prohibition of rejecting God's natural diversity and the importance of respecting it.³¹

Researchers express surprise when presenting this verse as a foundation for religious tolerance, religious moderation, and religious pluralism from Hamka's

²⁸Amrullah, *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, 1/623.

²⁹Moh Mufid Muawaffaq, "Penafsiran Hamka Tentang Ayat Kemajemukan Dalam Tafsir Al-Azhar," *MUTAWATIR* 9, no. 1 (April 22, 2020): 109-24, doi:10.15642/mutawatir.2019.9.1.109-124.

³⁰Nurlina and Busro, "The Concept of Religious Tolerance in Indonesia According to Buya Hamka in Tafsir Al-Azhar."

³¹Nugraha, Noor, and Mustofa, "Menanamkan Sikap Toleransi Pada Masyarakat Multikultural Dalam Perspektif Tafsir Al-Azhar."

perspective. In his tafsir work, Hamka does not specifically delve into discussions of tolerance, moderation, and pluralism in the field of religion. In fact, at the end of his commentary on the verse, Hamka reverts to the concept of piety towards Allah. Hamka's method of interpretation applied when commenting on this verse is like an inverted pyramid, starting with something general and narrowing down to something specific. And that specific aspect is found at the end of the discussion, "The most noble among you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you."³² This concluding explanation by Hamka is never mentioned, cited, and is instead concealed by those advocating moderation, merely to strengthen their argument. Such mistakes often occur when researchers attempt to dissect Hamka's comments on Quranic verses that address issues of tolerance among religions. Therefore, out of the several foundational verses used, there is no need to explain each one individually, and three examples are sufficient for this paper.

The Jewish Conspiracy in Hamka's Interpretation of al-Azhar

As known, in the concept of tolerance promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, there are two elements: interfaith and intra-faith tolerance. Interfaith tolerance is aimed at eliminating racist attitudes, sentiments, and other forms of hatred. One of the elements to eradicate hatred is through addressing suspicions towards followers of other religions. The elements of suspicion towards other religions that are explored in this discussion are specifically focused on suspicions towards Jews. If in Hamka's tafsir Al-Azhar, there are suspicions presented in a conspiracy model, it is clear that Hamka's interpretation does not fully support the concept of interfaith tolerance from the perspective of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

On a global scale, in Al-Azhar, Hamka declares the absoluteness of Islam Muhammadanism and criticizes other religions. Although Hamka criticizes other religions, what is unique is when he discusses Jews who are depicted as having a mission to dominate the world, reshape it according to their desires, and have aspirations to alter the moral values, laws, and beliefs of Muslims, using their power in terms of economics, politics, and media. This can be seen in Hamka's comments inserted while interpreting the Quran.

In interpreting Al-Baqarah 2:7, Hamka mentions that Jewish influence on the world economy is so significant that Muslims are forced to use the *riba* (usury) system and have no other choice.³³ He also relates the concept of *riba* to Jews in Al-Baqarah 2:120 and 280, stating that it is a teaching of Jews and that the finance on Wall Street (New York) is controlled by Jewish bankers. Hamka argues that due to Jewish domination of the world's finance, Islamic countries are compelled to establish banks and conduct trade and economy based on *riba*. According to him, there is no other

³²Amrullah, *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, 9/6836.

³³Ibid, 1/125.

option available to Islamic countries because the entire world has been controlled by Jewish teachings.³⁴

Hamka also explains that due to Jewish dominance in the world, Jews become the primary source behind the manipulation of the world's movements, including in the fields of film, politics, and media. In regards to Jewish control in the film industry, Hollywood becomes the subject of discussion. This can be seen from Hamka's interpretation of Al-Nisā 4:46, where he states, "They (Jews) influence the entire role of the world, including morally destructive films from Hollywood, the majority of which are produced by Jews."³⁵ In Al-Mā'idah 5:64, he further adds, "Even the famous Hollywood films largely shape the materialistic culture of the world and are primarily financed by Jews."³⁶ Through films, they control the world." In Al-A'rāf 7:33, he mentions that Jews, also known as Zionists, utilize various means, including films, radio, and television, to corrupt the minds of the world.³⁷

Moreover, Hamka firmly warns Muslims not to trust or even watch films depicting the history of past prophets produced by the West. One example of such a film is described in his work when interpreting Al-A'rāf 7:154, which reads, "The Ten Commandments, which was filmed by American experts, and due to the highly advanced film technology, it depicts the moment when Prophet Moses faced Allah. Lightning bolts strike the Mount Sinai, and with each strike, one commandment is engraved, until all ten commandments are revealed. Finally, another lightning bolt comes, causing the stone with the inscribed commandments to be dislodged from its place, falling down, and then taken by Prophet Moses. Be cautious, as it is only a film. The director of this film is Cecil B. DeMille, who was a Jew (1914-1959)."³⁸

Regarding the topic of Jewish control in world politics, Hamka mentions the historical animosity between Christians and Jews and how this changed when Pope Paul VI granted general pardon to Jews in 1964, absolving them of their previous accusations and blaming for the crucifixion of Jesus. Hamka argues that this was a political pardon, as the wealthy Jews had to unite with Christians to counter the perceived threat of Islam. He also mentions the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and the idea proposed by the Catholic Church to hand over the control of the Holy Land to an international body, away from the Arab Muslims who had held it for over 1,300 years, and to Christian-controlled nations in the United Nations.³⁹

In Hamka's interpretation of the Quranic verses, he uncovers the power that Jews possess, enabling them to change the course of the world's life. He mainly focuses on their influence in the world economy, which spills over into politics and media. He mentions the names of famous figures like Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud,

³⁴Ibid, 1/287-288.

³⁵Ibid, 2/1241.

³⁶Ibid, 3/1794.

³⁷Ibid, 4/2357.

³⁸Ibid, 4/2513.

³⁹Ibid, 3/1762.

Jean-Paul Sartre, Nobel, Albert Einstein, and Baron Rothschild, who are claimed to be Jewish and attributes their emergence to a deep-seated sense of humiliation and revenge after centuries of oppression in European society, leading to the rise of Jewish intellectuals.⁴⁰

Hamka claims that Muslims have experienced setbacks and are easily conquered because they have forgotten the teachings of their religion and adopted principles of life from non-Muslim figures, leading to the ideologies of nationalism and Marxist socialism. According to Hamka, the West's hatred towards Arabs is not due to their Arab identity but because they are Muslims. This is evident when Hamka narrates the reasons for Israel's victory over Palestine from before 1967 to 1948. Hamka explains:

The Arab people who fought against Israel or sought to reclaim Palestine before 1967, no longer mentioned Islam. They had replaced Islam with Jahiliyyah nationalism or Marxist scientific socialism. How could the Arabs win when their source of strength, their faith, was abandoned? Those who still upheld Islamic ideology were accused of being reactionary. The name of Prophet Muhammad as the leader and builder of the Arab nation had long been abandoned, and instead, the name of Karl Marx, a Jew, was emphasized. So, in their fight against the Jews, they abandoned their own leaders and presented Jewish leaders. At the same time, the unity of Muslim beliefs was shattered by other ideologies, especially those that prioritized their own nations. This led to an unbalanced situation where, in Indonesia itself, while the Arab people were saddened by their defeat, the Republic of Indonesia, whose population is 99% Muslim, did not send government representatives to console those nations. Instead, they invited Emperor Haile Selassie, a Christian emperor who fiercely fought to eliminate Islam from his country.⁴¹

Hamka also revives his conspiracy theories about Jews when discussing the concept of statehood in Indonesia. According to him, Jews and Christians fundamentally share the same goal, which is to prevent the establishment of Islam and to eradicate it from the earth. In the colonial era, those who claimed to be Muslims but expressed opinions contaminated by Jews and Christians could be quickly identified and refuted. However, after gaining independence, such contaminated opinions could no longer be easily identified. Hamka explains:

In the past colonial era, if there were people who claimed to be Muslims but expressed opinions that were essentially poisonous ideas received from cooperation with Christians and Zionists, they could be immediately marked and refuted. But after the country gained independence, especially in Indonesia, it became difficult to confront such voices. Because after independence, people can use various pretexts such as nationalism, identity, and anything else. Anything to avoid the emergence of a spirit to revive Islam. The puppeteers behind the scenes are the People of the Book, equipped with their Orientalists, professors, and scholars. Although Islam

⁴⁰Ibid, 4/2590.

⁴¹Ibid, 1/213.

proclaims in the holy Quran that humanity is one, that the coming of Prophet Muhammad completes the revelation that began with the ancient prophets, and that Islam means seeking a peaceful path, the response it receives is gunfire from all directions. Their determination is that Islam must disappear from the face of the earth.⁴²

These comments from Hamka are steeped in conspiracy theories and lead to suspicions that ultimately undermine the concept of religious tolerance. Hamka's thinking reflects exclusivism and contradicts the concept of religious moderation that Kemenag seeks, as it hopes to achieve inclusivism in Indonesia.

Conclusion

The commentary "Tafsir al-Azhar" by Hamka is one of the works written during times of political turmoil, both domestically and internationally, particularly during the period of Israel's independence over Arab lands. The defeat of the Arab nations, referred to as Islamic countries, in the struggle for the Holy Land of Baitul-Maqdis, cannot be denied. This has caused sorrow in the hearts of Muslims, including Hamka. The reasons for the Arab Muslim's defeat are expressed by Hamka in his commentary, particularly when discussing the unity of the Muslim ummah and the non-Muslims' hatred towards Muslims. Suspicion towards Jews is raised by discussing conspiracy of Zion and the new world order, which ultimately leads to an exclusive Islamic ideology within Hamka's commentary.

With the presence of exclusive Islamic ideology embedded in Hamka's commentary, it is evident that it contradicts the concept of religious tolerance in Indonesia. If Hamka's commentary continues to be extensively studied by Indonesian students, then to some extent, Hamka's exclusive Islamic ideology may have an impact. If that happens, it could hinder the aspiration to establish religious moderation in Indonesia. If Indonesia truly wishes to fully realize religious moderation, it can learn from America, which dares to remove works that promote exclusivity.

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⁴²Ibid, 4/2566.

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