

# Freedom Of Religion In The View Of The Qur'an: A Comparative Classical-Contemporary Interpretation

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**Abstract.** Religious freedom is a crucial issue that continues to evolve in an increasingly complex global world. This study presents an in-depth analysis of spiritual freedom in the Qur'an through a comparative approach between the interpretations of classical scholars and contemporary exegetes. This study departs from the central question: how is the Qur'an's view of religious freedom interpreted by classical and modern exegetes, and to what extent do differences in socio-historical contexts influence these interpretations?. Through a comprehensive literature study, we explore how classical interpretations, often considered rigid, interact with more progressive contemporary interpretations, creating innovative dialogue and valuing diversity. This study not only reveals gaps in current understanding but also offers bold solutions to the challenges of religious freedom in the modern era. Our findings show that embracing new perspectives can create a stronger foundation for pluralism and tolerance in society. By presenting these paradigm-shifting insights, this research has the potential to be a turning point in academic discussions and policy practices related to religious freedom.

**Keywords:** Religious Freedom, Classical-Contemporary Tafsir, Al-Qur'an.

## Introduction

Freedom of religion is a fundamental pillar in diverse societies, often overlooked in religious and social discourse.<sup>1</sup> In the Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 256; Surah Al-Kafirun, verse 6; and Surah Al-Kahf, verse 29, provide a strong foundation for understanding this right. While all three verses emphasize the importance of freedom, different interpretations between classical and contemporary commentaries often lead to confusion and conflict. In most Muslim societies, the question of how Islam, notably the Qur'an as its primary source, understands religious freedom remains a relevant issue. This is increasingly urgent given that debates about apostasy, religious conversion, and interfaith coexistence are still common.<sup>2</sup> Classical tafsir is often trapped in the context of its time, with its historical approach. These interpretations may not fully address the challenges facing Muslims today. In contrast, contemporary tafsir seeks to adapt the understanding of the verses to the evolving modern situation.<sup>3</sup> The gap between these two approaches demands an in-depth and comprehensive analysis. It is essential to explore the true meaning of religious freedom in these verses by recognizing that this difference can help bridge conflicts arising from diverse interpretations.

Regarding this theme, many researchers and academics have studied it both in general and in specific contexts. The following researchers will present a map of previous research. First, the concept

<sup>1</sup> Neelam Bano et al., "Principles of Religious Pluralism," *Religions* 14, no. 1 (2023): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14010020>.

<sup>2</sup> Farhood Badri, "A Genuine Islamic Conceptualization of Religious Freedom," *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights*, 15, no. 1 (2018): 1–27, <https://doi.org/doi:10.1515/mwjhr-2018-0020>.

<sup>3</sup> Yusuf Olawale Uthman Owa-Onire, "The Interpretation of Islamic Education: Perceptions of Modernist and Classical Thinkers on The Qur'anic Exegesis," *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 3, no. 1 (2022): 77–91, <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v3i1.129>.

of human rights from the perspective of the Qur'an by Damayanti et al.<sup>4</sup> Second, "the right to life" in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): a comparative study of human rights with the Qur'an and Sunnah by Udin et al.<sup>5</sup> Third, Islamic education without discrimination from the perspective of the Qur'an by Basri.<sup>6</sup> Fourth, the perspectives of human rights and Islamic law on child beating, as reflected in the hadith narrated by Ahmad, number 6756, regarding child education, by Izadi et al.<sup>7</sup> Fifth, the values of peace education from the perspective of the Qur'an by Hadisaputra et al.<sup>8</sup> Sixth, the study of freedom of expression in Islamic teachings, with an emphasis on Nahj Al-Balagha, by Irwanti et al.<sup>9</sup> Seventh, the concept of education according to the Qur'an Hadith by Syahrone.<sup>10</sup> Eighth, analysis of the scope of ham based on the hadith by Wahid et al.<sup>11</sup> Ninth, human rights and social justice in the context of the Qur'an: a global trend by Nirwana et al.<sup>12</sup> Tenth, human rights and religious education: a study with special reference to Islam by Kumar et al.<sup>13</sup> This study seeks to fill this gap by examining religious freedom in the Qur'an through a comparison of classical and contemporary interpretations.

This study aims to bridge these two worlds by exploring the beauty of the Qur'an's message of religious freedom while considering the ever-changing social dynamics. Using a comparative approach, we seek to show that a deeper, more progressive understanding of religious freedom is not only possible but also necessary for creating a harmonious, mutually respectful society. The research questions that are the focus of this study are: how is the concept of religious freedom explained in the Qur'an by classical exegetes, how do contemporary exegetes reinterpret this concept in the modern socio-political context, and what factors influence the differences in interpretation between the two?

This research method uses a qualitative approach with the type of literature. The data collected in this research were obtained from various books, e-books, journals, proceedings, websites, and the like. Then, this discussion collects several verses from multiple letters that discuss freedom of religion, such as Surah Al-Baqarah 25, Al-Kafirun 6, and Al-Kahf 29. One of the primary and secondary data collection techniques used is the collection of documentation from various research sources, such as journals, books, books of interpretation, and Al-Qur'an sources. First, researchers searched for data relevant to this research through the "Ministry of Qur'an". Google Scholar, Publish Or Perish, and books of Tafsir such as Ibn Kathir's Tafsir, Imam Abu Ja'far with the book At-Thabari, Jami' Al-Bayan Fi Ta'wil Al-Qur'an, Imam Al-Qurthubi, Imam Al-

<sup>4</sup> Nurzannah Damayanti et al., "The Concept of Human Rights from The Qur'an Perspective," *Bulletin of Islamic Research* 2, no. 1 (2024): 17–32, <https://doi.org/10.69526/bir.v2i1.20>.

<sup>5</sup> Md Fakar Uddin, Noor Mohammad Osmani, and Khairil Husaini Jamil, "The 'Right to Life' in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): A Comparative Study between the UDHR and the Qur'an and Sunnah," *UMRAN - International Journal of Islamic and Civilizational Studies* 10, no. 3 (2023): 41–55, <https://doi.org/10.11113/umran2023.10n3.639>.

<sup>6</sup> Basri Basri, "The Islamic Education Without Discrimination in the Qur'an Perspective," *Jurnal At-Tibyan: Jurnal Ilmu Alqur'an Dan Tafsir* 7, no. 1 (2022): 121–35, <https://doi.org/10.32505/at-tibyan.v7i1.4212>.

<sup>7</sup> Fariz Farrih Izadi, Syahrul Fauzul Kabir, and Asep Hakim Zakiran, "Perspective of Human Rights and Islamic Law Regarding Batting of Children in Ahmad Historical Hadith No 6756 Concerning Child Education," *Proceedings of the 4th Social and Humanities Research Symposium (SoRes 2021)* 658, no. 6756 (2022): 504–6, <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.220407.103>.

<sup>8</sup> Prosmala Hadisaputra et al., "The Values of Peace Education in the Perspective of the Holy Qur'an," *Journal of Islamic Education* 5, no. 2020 (2020): 29–37, <https://doi.org/10.22452/jier.vol5no2020.4>.

<sup>9</sup> Marlinda Irwanti et al., "The Study of Freedom of Expression in Islamic Teachings with an Emphasis on Nahj Al-Balagha," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 79, no. 1 (2023): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i1.8368>.

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Irfan Syahrone, "Konsep Pendidikan Menurut Al-Qur'an Hadis," *Ejurnal Al Musthafa* 2, no. 2 (2022): 66–76, <https://doi.org/10.62552/ejam.v2i2.46>.

<sup>11</sup> Abd Wahid et al., "Analysis of the Scope of Human Rights Based on the Hadiths," *Petita: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Hukum Dan Syariah* 9, no. 1 (2024): 164–84, <https://doi.org/10.22373/petita.v9i1.282>.

<sup>12</sup> A. N. Andri Nirwana et al., "Human Rights and Social Justice in Quranic Contexts: A Global Trend," *Legality: Jurnal Ilmiah Hukum* 32, no. 2 (2024): 453–71, <https://doi.org/10.22219/ljih.v32i2.35088>.

<sup>13</sup> Sanjeev Kumar and Harikumar, "Human Rights and Religious Education: A Study with Special Reference to Islam," *Integrated Journal for Research in Arts and Humanities* 2, no. 6 (2022): 71–78, <https://doi.org/10.55544/ijrah.2.6.9>.

Zamakhshari in al-Kasysyaf, Sheikh Ibn' Assur, Prof. Dr. Hamka in his book Al-Azhar Tafsir, Prof. Dr. H. Quraish Shihab in his work Tafsir Al-Misbah, and Shaykh Muhammad Abduh. Furthermore, researchers reviewed the sources obtained to ensure the data were credible, in accordance with the discussion category. The data obtained is then analyzed to verify and draw conclusions.

## Result and Discussion

### The Principle Of No Compulsion in Religion: An Analysis of Qs. Al-Baqarah (2:256)

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ۚ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ  
الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

*There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The correct course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. Moreover, Allah is Hearing and Knowing.*

79) The word tagut is used to refer to anything that exceeds the limits of evil. Therefore, devils, the Dajjal, sorcerers, those who establish laws that contradict the laws of Allah SWT, and tyrannical rulers are called tagut.

The content of the commandment “There is no compulsion in religion” is consistent with the principle that Islam upholds freedom of religion and belief. Imam Ibn Kathir (d. 774H) explains that you should not force someone to convert to Islam because Islam is clear, bright, and clear in its arguments and evidence. There is no need to force someone to embrace a religion; on the other hand, it is Allah who will later give the human being the guidance to embrace Islam by expanding his chest and explaining his heart so that he embraces Islam sincerely, willingly, and consciously. Basically, when the human heart is blinded to the guidance of Allah, both his hearing and his sight are locked off by Him, meaning that it is futile to force someone to embrace Islam by force.<sup>14</sup>

Imam Abu Ja'far in the book of Tafsir At-Thabari Jami' Al-Bayan Fi Ta'wil Al-Qur'an explains the most correct opinion is the opinion of those who say: this verse was revealed specifically to certain people, he said the meaning of “There is no compulsion to (enter) the religion (Islam)” of the People of the Book and the Magi, as well as all those who have chosen a religion other than Islam, and are taxed from it. He explained that the meaning of the verse is that coercion to a religion other than Islam is discouraged, and that the verse is also meant to reinforce the position of those with different beliefs, and to remind them that they are free to follow whatever religion they wish, but that the obligation to pay taxes still applies to all of them.

Imam Al-Qurthubi explains, “There is no compulsion to (enter) the religion (Islam)”. الدِّين in this verse is aqidah and religion. Al-Ikraah (compulsion) here does not mean Al-Ikraah (compulsion) in the law of faith, buying and selling, grants, and others, but this verse is an interpretation of the words of Allah SWT “except those who are forced to disbelieve” (Qs. An-Nahl [16]; 106). However, Ashhab said, the captive is condemned to the religion of the one who captured him. If they refuse, then they may be forced to embrace Islam. As for young children, they do not yet have a religion, so it is permissible to force them to embrace Islam so that they do not embrace an unlawful religion. As for other disbelievers, if they are willing to pay tribute, then we should not force them to adopt Islam, whether they are Arabs or non-Arabs, whether they are from the Quraysh or from other tribes. According to Al-Qurthubi, the verse emphasizes that coercion in matters of aqidah is unjustified, in

<sup>14</sup> Ibnu Kasir, “Tafsir Al Baqarah 253 s.d Al Imran 91,” n.d.

contrast to some situations where coercion may be applicable, such as in the ruling against prisoners of war. He also points out that although there are nuances that distinguish coercion from freedom, there is a deeper essence: Islam still emphasizes respect for individual choice.

Imam Al-Zamakhshari (467-538 AH) in *al-Kasyshaf* states that Allah does not allow Islam to be forced upon people, but through inner stability and choice. This is in line with Qs. Yunus [10]: 99: “Had your Lord willed, all the people of the earth would have believed. Will you (Muhammad) force people until they become believers?” In simple terms, if Allah wants to force, then it can be done, but the issue of faith is not the case. Sheikh Ibn’ Ashur also stated that Qs. Al-Baqarah verse 256 is a firm argument against coercion in religion in all its forms, because choosing faith must be based on evidence and critical reasoning.

Buya Hamka, in his Tafsir Al-Azhar, volume 1, says that this verse really challenges man because Islam is faithful. People will not be forced to embrace it; they are only invited to think. As long as a person has a healthy mind, they will definitely come to Islam. However, if there is coercion, there will be rape of the mind, and there will be taqlid. Man, as a person, will come and go, be born, and die, but the human mind will continue. Human judgment on religion will continue, and freedom of thought in choosing beliefs is the goal of advanced humanity.<sup>15</sup>

Quraish Shihab, in his work Tafsir Al-Misbah, volume 1, explains that what is meant by “no compulsion” in adhering to religion is adhering to its creed. If someone has chosen one creed, say the Islamic creed, then he is bound by its guidance; he is obliged to carry out its commands. Returning to the verse’s affirmation, Allah wants everyone to feel peace. Peace cannot be achieved if the soul is not at peace, and force causes the soul not to be at peace, so there is no compulsion in embracing the Islamic faith. This is in line with Qs. Al-Maidah verse 48 “If Allah had willed, He would have made you one people only”.<sup>16</sup>

In both classical and contemporary commentaries, freedom of religion is linked to the recognition of those who choose not to embrace Islam, emphasizing that although in some cases coercion may be permissible, the individual’s right to choose remains a principle that should not be ignored. They condemn coercion as an ineffective and dangerous method, which will only create conflict.

### Religious Tolerance and Recognition of Difference: Interpretation of Qs. Al-Kafirun (109:6)

لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ ۝

*For you is your religion, and for me is my religion.”*

Imam Ibn Kathir explained that the matter of creed among the tawhid of glorifying Allah cannot be compromised or mixed with shirk. Tawheed, if it has been reconciled with shirk, it means the victory of shirk. Imam Abu Ja’far in the book of Tafsir At-Thabari, Jami’ Al-Bayan Fi Ta’wil Al-Qur’an, volume 26, explains that the meaning of the verse is: “For you is your religion, so that you will never leave it, because it has been applied to you and it has been determined that you will not break away from it.” You will also die embracing it. For me, it is the religion that I now embrace, and I will never leave it, for it has been established in Allah’s foreknowledge that I will not depart from it to another.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Prof. DR. HAMKA, “Tafsir Al-Azhar Jilid 1,” *Ayat-Ayat Konservasi Lingkungan*, 2019, 1–9.

<sup>16</sup> Shihab Quraish, “Tafsir Al-Misbah Jilid 11,” *Analytical Biochemistry* 11, no. 1 (2002): 561.

<sup>17</sup> Ahmad Abdurraziq Al Bakri and Dkk, “Tafsir Ath-Thabari Juz ’Amma,” 26, 2007, 1689–99.

Imam Al-Qurthubi, in interpreting the verse “for you is your religion, for me is my religion too,” the high wall that divides us is deep, meaning that you are satisfied with the religion you adhere to. We are happy with the religion we adhere to. He emphasized that you will be rewarded according to your religion, and I will be rewarded according to mine. Moreover, the reason for mentioning “religion” in the teachings they practiced is that they believed in and practiced them.

Shaykh Muhammad Abduh explains this difference in his tafsir: for you is your religion; use the religion itself; nor should I be invited to worship that which is not God. Moreover, for me, it is my religion; do not let it be mixed up with what you call religion.

Buya Hamka, in his interpretation of the Al-Azhar volume 10, explains that the letter provides firm guidance for us, followers of the Prophet Muhammad, that the creed cannot be reconciled. Therefore, the creed of tawhid does not recognize what is called cynicism, which means adjusting, for example, between animism and monotheism, idol worship and prayer, slaughtering animals to worship ghosts or jinn by Reading Bismillah.<sup>18</sup>

Quraish Shihab, in his interpretation of Al-Misbah volume 15, says that after emphasizing the impossibility of meeting in the beliefs of Islam and the beliefs of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, with the beliefs of those who associate partners with Allah, the verse stipulates how to meet in social life, namely: *For you in particular, your religion*. This religion does not touch me in the least; you are free to practice it according to your beliefs, and for me, my religion in particular, I should be free to practice it, and you will not be touched in the least by it.<sup>19</sup>

In classical and contemporary interpretations of Surah Al-Kafirun verse 6, it is understood as a statement that confirms the boundaries between Islam and other faiths. They emphasize that the verse is an affirmation that Muslims will not adopt practices or beliefs from different religions. This separation is interpreted as an assertion of Islamic identity, in which followers are expected to adhere to their faith without compromise. The phrase “for you your religion and for me my religion” is an invitation to respect differences.

### Freedom of Choice and Moral Responsibility: The Massage of Qs. Al-Kahf ayat 29

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ نَارًا أَحَاطَ بِهِمْ سُرَادِقُهَا وَإِنْ يَسْتَعِينُوا يُعَاثُوا بِمَاءٍ كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِي الْوُجُوهَ بِئْسَ الشَّرَابُ وَسَاءَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا

*And say, “The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills - let him believe; and whoever wills - let him disbelieve.” Indeed, we have prepared for the wrongdoers a fire whose walls will surround them. Moreover, if they call for relief, they will be relieved with water like murky oil, which scalds [their] faces. Wretched is the drink, and evil is the resting place.*

Imam Ibn Kathir said in his commentary (Juz 15) that Allah, the Almighty, said to His Messenger: “O Muhammad, tell the people that what you have conveyed to them from their Lord is a righteous matter about which there is no doubt”. He emphasized that this sentence contains a threat and a strong warning.

<sup>18</sup> Buya Hamka, “Tafsir Al-Azhar Jilid IX,” *Analytical Biochemistry* 11, no. 1 (2018): 1–5, <http://link.springer.com/10.1007/978-3-319-59379-1%0Ahttp://dx.doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-420070-8.00002-7%0Ahttp://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ab.2015.03.024%0Ahttps://doi.org/10.1080/07352689.2018.1441103%0Ahttp://www.chile.bmw-motorrad.cl/sync/showroom/lam/es/>.

<sup>19</sup> M Quraish Shihab, “Tafsir Al-Misbah; Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian, Vol. 15,” *Jakarta: Lentera Hati* 15 (2002): 392–418.

Imam Abu Ja'far in the book of Tafsir At-Thabari Jami' Al-Bayan Fi Ta'wil Al-Qur'an volume 17 explains that Allah Ta'ala said to His Prophet: "O Muhammad, say to those whom we have turned away from the remembrance of us and followed their lusts: 'O People, the truth is from your Lord, in Whose hand is guidance and misguidance. He guides whomever He wills of you to the straight path to believe, and misleads whomever He wills to disbelieve. There is no power in my hands whatsoever in that. I am not an exorcist for those who follow their lusts. I believe in Allah and what has been revealed to me. If you wish, then believe, and if you wish, disbelieve'".<sup>20</sup>

Imam Al-Qurhubi, in his book, volume 10, explains that Allah gives the truth to whomever he wants, even if they are weak, and does not give it to whomever he does not want, even if they are strong and prosperous. We do not drive away the believers because of your lusts, so if you wish, then believe, and if you wish, then disbelieve. This is neither a concession nor a choice between faith and disbelief; rather, it is a terrible thing and a threat.<sup>21</sup>

Buya Hamka, in his work Tafsir Al-Azhar, explains that truth comes from God, not from me and not from you. Truth is above all. In facing the truth, there is no difference between the strong and the weak. If he feels that the truth is excellent, approved by his own heart, if you want to believe. For you have been given reason. You alone can weigh and seal the truth. If you believe, you are saved, for you have obeyed the voice of your own reason; and if you disbelieve, it is not others who will bear the consequences of disbelief, but you yourself.<sup>22</sup>

Quraish Shihab, in his tafsir Al-Misbah volume 8, explains that the values contained in the verse should not be changed or ignored. It is a fixed price. It is haq, stable, and unchanging, because its source is Allah SWT. Therefore, whoever wants to accept it, please accept it; and whoever is reluctant, let him be reluctant.<sup>23</sup>

In classical and contemporary tafsir, as explained by several scholars in their books of tafsir, Surah Al-Kahf, verse 29 is understood as a statement affirming that truth comes from Allah and that every individual has the choice to believe or not to believe. They see the verse as an affirmation that, although Allah grants freedom in choosing one's religion, the consequences of that choice remain. This interpretation emphasizes individuals' responsibility for their religious decisions, highlighting that faith cannot be coerced but rather chosen with awareness.

### Comparative Synthesis: Classical and Contemporary Interpretation of Religious Freedom

The Indonesian state has also regulated human rights, especially freedom of religion. As contained in paragraph 28E of the 1945 Constitution, every person has the right to embrace a religion and worship according to their religion. Article 29, verse 2 of the 1945 Constitution also states that the state guarantees every citizen the freedom to profess and practice their religion and beliefs.<sup>24</sup> In

<sup>20</sup> Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir Ath-Thabari, "Tafsir Thabari Jilid 17," *Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling* 53, no. 9 (2013): 1689–99.

<sup>21</sup> Imam Qurthubi, "Tafsir Al Qurthubi Surah A Hijr, An-Nahl, Al-Israa Dan Al Kahfi," *Ta'liq: Muhammad Ibrahim Al Hifnawi Tabrij: Muhammad Hamid Utman* 10 (2008): 498.

<sup>22</sup> AMAK Amrullah, "Tafsir Al-Azhar," *Singapore: Kerjaya Printing Industries*, 2003, [https://www.academia.edu/download/70191859/Tafsir\\_Al\\_Azhar\\_04.pdf](https://www.academia.edu/download/70191859/Tafsir_Al_Azhar_04.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, "Peran, Kesan, Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an Vol 8," <https://ia801806.us.archive.org/13/items/Tafsir-Al-Misbah-Prof-Dr.-m.-Quraish-Shihab-/Tafsir%20Al-Misbah%20Jilid%2008%20-Dr.%20M.%20Quraish%20Shihab-Pages-Deleted.Pdf>, 2022.

<sup>24</sup> Sekretariat Jenderal MPR RI, "Undang-Undang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia Tahun 1945 Dalam Satu Naskah," *Jdih.Bapeten.Go.Id*, 1945, 1–21, <https://jdih.bapeten.go.id/en/dokumen/peraturan/undang-undang-dasar-negara-republik-indonesia-tahun-1945>.

addition, Article 22, paragraph 1, of Law No. 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights states that everyone has the right to embrace their respective religions and to worship according to their beliefs.<sup>25</sup>

Freedom of religion in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 25; Al-Kafirun, verse 6; and Al-Kahf, verse 29, when compared with classical and contemporary interpretations, aligns with John Rawls's theory of justice. In his book "A Theory of Justice," Rawls emphasizes that a just society must guarantee freedom of religion as part of distributive justice.<sup>26</sup> Seeing that there are still many problems that occur around us, such as discrimination against freedom of religion, this discrimination is very contrary to the principles of justice proposed by Rawls. If this principle of justice is applied, this discrimination should not exist, and every human being has the right and freedom to make choices about their religion and beliefs.<sup>27</sup>

Pluralism can also serve as a foundation for religious freedom, as John Hick's view holds that all religions contain the truth and that no single religion has a monopoly on it.<sup>28</sup> This emphasizes that the spiritual experiences that depart from each religion must be respected and promoted together to bridge religious differences and foster more progressive cooperation and dialogue.<sup>29</sup> In simple terms, Hick holds that dialogue between religions must also remain grounded in equality and respect.

The Christian scholar Philip Hitti, who became an American citizen, in his book *History of the Arabs*, acknowledges that this verse is among the Islamic verses that people of all religions should follow.<sup>30</sup> He argues that the teachings in the verses on religious freedom invite people to respect one another, be tolerant, and live in harmony, even though they come from different backgrounds.

The above is in line with research conducted by Armayanto et al., entitled "Between religious freedom and apostasy: an analysis of Surah Al-Baqarah verse 256." The findings explain that religious freedom in Islam is related to the relationship between servants and God. Muslims are not free to do something because of their obligations as servants. This means that Islam does not allow its people to apostatize and also does not force others to embrace this religion. There is also another study on a comparative critical discourse analysis of the translation of the Qur'an: "A Comparative Critical Discourse Analysis of the Translation of the Qur'an: Maulana Maududi and Javed Ghamidi's Interpretation of Verse 256 of Surah Al-Baqarah," by Asghar.<sup>31</sup> In his findings, the power structure and ideological influence in society reflect Maududi's emphasis on the Islamic state, in contrast to Ghamidi's contextual and rational Islam. The translation shapes societal dynamics by reinforcing specific interpretations, such as Maududi's clarity on doctrine or Ghamidi's promotion of individual autonomy.

<sup>25</sup> Komnas HAM, "Undang-Undang No . 39 Tahun 1999," *Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 39 Tahun 1999 Tentang Hak Asasi Manusia*, no. 39 (1999): 1–45.

<sup>26</sup> JOHN RAWLS, *A Theory of Justice* (Harvard University Press, 1971), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvjf9z6v>.

<sup>27</sup> Nurfaika Ishak and Romalina Ranaivo Mikea Manitra, "Constitutional Religious Tolerance in Realizing the Protection of Human Rights in Indonesia," *Journal of Human Rights, Culture and Legal System* 2, no. 1 (2022): 31–44, <https://doi.org/10.53955/jhcls.v2i1.24>.

<sup>28</sup> John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, 1st ed. (Palgrave Macmillan London, 1989), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230371286>.

<sup>29</sup> Akeem Olayinka Kazeem and Fatmir Shehu, "Analyzing John H. Hick's Religious Pluralism and Its Implications from Islamic Ethical Perspectives," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 13, no. 2 (2023): 178–94, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.132.12>.

<sup>30</sup> Philip Khuri Hitti and Walid Khalidi, *History of the Arabs* (Springer, 1943).

<sup>31</sup> Jabreel. Asghar, "Publisher by: Department of Hadith, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan.," *Ulim Al-Sunnah* `02, no. 01 (2024): 1–13, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13778330>.

In line with research conducted by Mustofa & Syarifah.<sup>32</sup> About the meaning of Al-Hurriyah in the Qur'an. Al-Baqarah [2]: 256 and Qs. Al-Kahf [18]: 29: a Maqasid approach of Ibn' Ashur. In his findings, he explains that the meaning of Al-hurriyah, as understood by Ibn' Assyria, is freedom to choose a religion believed in, with no compulsion to choose it. Ibn' Assyria explained that a Muslim is allowed to help fellow human beings in the social sphere, not in matters of religion, belief, or creed.

Basically, guidance is purely a gift from Allah Swt, because only He can expand the human chest and give light in his heart to always accept the truth. In this case, coercion will only lead to rejection and dissatisfaction, which creates distance between man and his Lord. A person who feels pressured to embrace a belief without deep understanding will have his heart shackled by uncertainties and doubts that actually lead him further away from the truth. This means that the Qur'an itself gives each individual the freedom to pursue their own spiritual journey, and the search for truth should at least be undertaken voluntarily and with full awareness, recognizing that freedom of religion is not only a matter of human rights but also a call to respect and appreciate one another. Simply by allowing everyone to find their own path, we have made room for God's guidance to work.

## Conclusion

This research has revealed an important breakthrough in understanding religious freedom through the lens of Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 256; Surah Al-Kafirun, verse 6; and Surah Al-Kahf, verse 29. By comparing classical and contemporary tafsir, we show that interpretations of these verses not only reflect theological understanding but also contribute to broader social dynamics. Our findings underscore that classical tafsir, while rich in tradition, is often trapped in a restrictive historical context. In contrast, contemporary tafsir offers perspectives that are more flexible and relevant to the challenges of our times. By embracing new perspectives, we can create a stronger foundation for pluralism and tolerance in society. Through a dialogue between these two interpretations, we can find innovative solutions to create a more tolerant society.

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<sup>32</sup> Ahmad Zainal Mustofa and Nurus Syarifah, "The Meaning of Al-Hurriyyah in QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 256 and QS. Al-Kahf [18]: 29: A Maqâsid Approach of Ibn 'Asyur," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 29, no. 1 (2021): 31, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v29i1.10661>.



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