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## THE VIEW OF THE OTHER IN MODERN MALAY EXEGESIS OF THE QUR'ĀN

Mohamad Nasrin Nasir\*

**Abstract:** The Qur'ān plays a major role in the understanding of many Malay Muslims in their daily practices and beliefs. Due to this, works of exegesis or *tafsir* of the Qur'ān have appeared in Malay since the 1940s. These exegeses play a role in the conceptualising of Muslims' view of themselves and others. Seeing the importance of Islam, various state religious institutions were created to provide and cater for teaching Islam to the public. As the Qur'ān is seen as a major factor in the conceptualisation of Muslims, this paper analyses the use of exegetical works on the Qur'ān in the teaching of the masses with the supervision of the state. The topic chosen is the view of these exegeses of the Qur'ān on other religions. The article will cover three main *tafsir* in contemporary Malaysia: *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*, *Tafsir Juzu' 'Amma* and *Tafsir al-Rahman*. It will be seen that *tafsir* is used by different state and local actors in the Malay religious scene to push a conservative understanding of religion that is helpful to preserve a homogenised Malay Muslim identity. Even though Jews and Christians are mentioned in the Qur'ān as People of the Book, many of these exegeses label them as “*kafir*” or deniers of the message of the Qur'ān. As is seen in one of the examples in the paper, even those not associated with the state directly have followed this approach, making an insular Malay Muslim identity, especially when referring to other religions and perhaps making dialogue between religions difficult if not nearly impossible. This paper highlights certain aspects of these exegeses and how they are a conservative way of interpreting the Qur'ān, which is against the more open, modern and pluralist way that is needed in today's modern world.

**Keywords:** *Malay tafsir, Jews, Christians, institutionalisation of Islam, Malay identity*

Since the arrival of Islam in Southeast Asia in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Malay Muslims have tried to understand the Qur'ān, with various approaches and various results. The rulers of the region had instituted Islamisation with the establishment of various positions for Islamic scholars, thus encouraging the teaching of Islam and the Qur'ān for the purpose of Islamising the nation. The result has been the production of *Tarjuman al-Mustafid*, the first *tafsir* of the entire Qur'ān, in 17<sup>th</sup> century Aceh. The text was written in Jawi script, which is used by Malay Muslims in understanding their religion and allowed the popularity of the *tafsir*. In a recent study, Peter Riddell compared an anonymous manuscript in the Cambridge University

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collection, probably also written in Aceh on the exegesis of surah 18 of the Qur'ān, with the exegesis found in the *Tarjuman*.<sup>1</sup> This indicates the existence of exegetical activity in the region in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Throughout the century, exegetical activity on the Qur'ān continued with various influences from the Middle East, including reformist tendencies. Later reformist tendencies in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which focused more on the Qur'ān, caused a flourishing of exegetical works on the Qur'ān written in the Malay Jawi script.

Islam is seen as a unifying identity for many Malay Muslims across the Southeast Asian region in various nation-state structures. The use of exegesis of the Qur'ān towards helping the formation of a sense of nationhood has played a significant role in many of the nation states since the 1960s. Mohamad coined the term “Divine Bureaucracy” to describe the process and later structure of institutionalisation of Islam in the new nation state of Malaysia.<sup>2</sup> Her study demonstrates how the state had involved itself in the control of what Muslims in Malaysia can believe when it comes to Islam. I will discuss her findings as I move forward. For now, it is important to keep in mind that, as the nation state achieved maturity, so too did the administration of Islamic affairs in Malaysia. The various Islamic institutions in the different states under the federation of Malaysia became involved in the formulation and later control of the belief system and social life of Muslims in Malaysia.

The importance of Islam as a civilising force of control on Muslims is important in the eyes of Malay-centric political parties and the power structure of present-day Malaysia.<sup>3</sup> As the belief of the Muslims are regulated to include not only the belief, theology and practice of Muslims in the country, so too are the social aspects of Muslim life regulated by the country's various state and federal institutions. This homogenisation of Islam, to a certain interpretation favourable to the state, is supported by many religious institutions in present-day Malaysia.<sup>4</sup>

This paper analyses the teachings of exegetical works regarding the regulation of Muslim beliefs of their religion and most specifically how Muslims think of other religions mentioned in the Qur'ān.

In Indonesia, the production of *Tafsir al-Quran* written by Mahmud Yunus was commissioned by the Indonesian government.<sup>5</sup> In Malaysia, *Tafsir Pimpinan Rahman* was commissioned by the state religious department, which is been under the auspices of the Prime Minister's department since the 1970s.

Apart from this state commissioned exegesis, other exegesis written by scholars who were educated in Egypt included *Tafsir Juzu' Amma* and *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*. The former was

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<sup>1</sup> Peter G. Riddell, *Malay Court Religion, Culture and Language: Interpreting the Qur'an in 17<sup>th</sup> Century Aceh* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Maznah Mohamad, *The Divine Bureaucracy and Disenchantment of Social Life: A Study of Bureaucratic Islam in Malaysia* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> Mohamad Nasrin Nasir, *Islam and Ethnicity in Malaysia*, Oxford Online Islamic Resources (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), [www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t343/e0317](http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t343/e0317).

<sup>4</sup> Mohamad, *The Divine Bureaucracy and Disenchantment of Social Life*.

<sup>5</sup> Mohamad Nasrin Nasir, *Quranic Exegesis in Southeast Asia*, Oxford Online Islamic Resources (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/print/opr/t343/e0017>.

written by a scholar who was educated in Egypt<sup>6</sup> and is still being taught in madrasahs and various mosques as part of religious teaching after the obligatory prayers of Maghrib. The latter was written by a scholar who was the chief *qadhi* or Sharia judge in Kedah, one of the northern states in Malaysia. All three *tafsir* works will be studied in this article and elaborated in each of their sections on how these exegetical works deal with the issue of other religions.

## TAFSIR JUZU' AMMA

### *Description*

This *tafsir* was originally written in the Jawi script by al-Allamah al-Adib Jama'in 'Abd al-Murad, a Sumatran Malay in Penang. It was completed on 4 June 1939 in Penang.<sup>7</sup> The date it began is open to conjecture. The *tafsir* deals with the last part (*juz'*) of the Qur'an, which covers 37 chapters (*surah*). In addition to these chapters is a commentary on the first chapter, i.e. *surah* al-Fatihah. The first chapter of the Qur'an is constantly recited by Muslims in their daily prayer. Therefore, in a sense, this commentary is useful as it provides meanings and commentary on the most relevant *surah* close to the Muslim heart. The fact it is a short and straightforward *tafsir* also makes the work popular among the Muslims of Southeast Asia. It is written in an easy-to-understand language and its brevity makes it a popular choice for many Malay Muslims.

### *Examples of Usage in Verses regarding Other Religions*

In this paper, the translated version in the *tafsir* will be given first and the accepted translation in English follows underneath.

Qur'an 98:1:

- Never will the kuffar from amongst the people of the book [*ahl kitab*] and the pagans be free from their deviancy until come to them a clear explanation.<sup>8</sup>
- Those who disbelieve among the People of the Book and the idolaters were not about to change their ways until they were sent clear evidence.<sup>9</sup>

Qur'an 98:2:

- Which is a Prophet from Allah who reads [from] the holy book.<sup>10</sup>
- A messenger from God, reading out pages [blessed with] purity.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Al-'Allamah al-Adib Jama'in Abdul Murad, *Tafsir Juz 'Amma* [Commentary on the Final Chapter], trans. Noraine Abu (Batu Caves: al-Hidayah Publications, 2019). This new edited edition mentions that most of the information about the background of the writer was gathered from an interview with his descendants.

<sup>7</sup> Abdul Murad, *Tafsir Juz 'Amma*, 337.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>9</sup> M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an: A New Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 430.

<sup>10</sup> Abdul Murad, *Tafsir Juz 'Amma*, 214.

<sup>11</sup> Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an*, 430.

The *tafsir* of this *surah* begins with an introduction, in which ‘Abd al-Murad states:

it is a natural occurrence amongst the people of the book (ahl kitab) i.e. the Jews and the Christians and others including the idolaters (musyrikin) to be in the dark in regards to their beliefs and creed (I’tiqad) and their practices which originate from the Prophets that they follow.<sup>12</sup>

‘Abd al-Murad then proceeds to give reasons for such deviant ideas, which are:

blindly imitating or following (mentaqlid) their ancestors or their elders in regards to issues connected to belief, creed and practices of religion...Many times people of the past or the elders have inserted or made certain irreligious matters into their religious understanding. These are neither the teachings of religion nor practices of a religious nature.<sup>13</sup>

According to ‘Abd al-Murad, there are three reasons for these insertions and additions:

1. Wrong or deviant understanding of the words contained in their sacred books.
2. Arrogance and hard-headedness, which causes them to add to their religion for the sake of defeating their enemy.
3. They view these additions as improving or strengthening of their religion, especially in terms of its appraisal.<sup>14</sup>

To ‘Abd al-Murad, the third reason is the most dangerous to religion. In general, he believes the other religions have mainly deviated due to the people of that religion adding to it for the sake of strengthening it. He believes these additions have happened even to the present time, resulting in the religion being enveloped by darkness, which is the result of mixing the right (*haqq*) and falsehoods into the practice of religion. However, he does not give any specific examples from the Jewish nor Christian religions to support his claims.

It is clear that what is being implied is that the teachings of religion should not be changed or altered from the literal teachings found originally in the sacred books. ‘Abd al-Murad asserts the view that, when Prophet Muhammad came with his message, he brought the brightest light to shine in the darkness prevailing in the other religions. This light, which was helped by God, managed to overwhelm the prevailing darkness thus uncovering those parts of religious teachings that were true and false. The teachings of Prophet Muhammad brought out the best in the people who embraced his teachings and made people who are akin to the falsehood to continue in their deviancy.<sup>15</sup>

These people, i.e. the People of the Book, continue in their ways and, instead of embracing what the Prophet had brought, rejected it. They tell themselves and their followers that

whatever the Prophet had brought is not new and in fact are also within our own teachings, mentioned in our own books and those before us...Even though Muhammad has not explained until now, we already know everything that he is about to preach. But whatever

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<sup>12</sup> Abdul Murad, *Tafsir Juz ‘Amma*, 214.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 214-5.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 216.

is with us already is much better from what is propagated by Muhammad. By believing so they have created a new way which had come from their own minds to blind those who are stupid.<sup>16</sup>

‘Abd al-Murad believes the Jews and Christians, due to their stubbornness and arrogance, have rejected the teachings of Muhammad and this view is similar to *Tafsir Nurul Ihsan*, which is shown later.

To relate their statements and rejection to the message brought by the Qur’ān, God gives this *surah* the name Bayyinah, which means clear proof. So, with that introduction or background, ‘Abd al-Murad begins his *tafsir* with the first verse of *surah* Bayyinah. It is interesting to contrast Jama’in ‘Abd al-Murad’s translation of the first verse in Malay and Abdel Haleem’s translation into English. As shown at the beginning of this section, the Malay has ‘Abd al-Murad’s intended meaning that the People of the Book are in general disbelievers or deviators (*kuffar*); however, the English translation taken from the original Arabic tries to particularise the *kuffar* to only some of the People of the Book. This is an important point of contrast as it creates a view from the exegesis that all Jews, Christians and other religions are from the *kuffar* while the English translation seeks to particularise the meaning to a group of them. Even though the translation can also be read to mean particular, ‘Abd al-Murad keeps asserting the general nature of the verse and comments as such.

To assert this general view, ‘Abd al-Murad in Malay reiterates his translation by saying:

with verse 1, Allah says: Never will the *kuffar* i.e. (yakni) those who reject but know your Prophethood, O Muhammad are those who have been revealed the book of God like the Jews and the Christians (*nasara*), as well as the polytheist (*musyrikun*) who worships the idols. They will stay and never shall be free from their ignorance and their darkness regarding the Truth (*haqq*) and reality, and from all their practices which were created by their elders and ancestors because they follow blindly the path of their elders until the Clear Evidence (*Bayyinah*) meaning clear and precise explanation that shows the truth as it is.<sup>17</sup>

Further in his commentary on verse 4, ‘Abd al-Murad regards those scholars from the People of the Book, i.e. Jews and Christians, as liars who have misguided their followers. To ‘Abd al-Murad, these scholars have not understood the real meaning of their sacred books and even among themselves they contradict each other in their interpretations.<sup>18</sup>

‘Abd al-Murad then continues to employ rhetorically a statement that:

if even themselves they are in disagreement therefore it is not surprising when we think about it, why the People of the Book does not accept the prophethood of our Prophet as God Messenger when Muhammad is mentioned as the Messenger of God in their own books. These verses are then spun and given a new interpretation (*ta’wil*) by their scholars and the majority of their followers merely follows their arguments as they have done from days of yonder...For those who are of pure at heart, the verses in His book will bring them

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>17</sup> Abdul Murad, *Tafsir Juz ‘Amma*, 218.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 219.

to accept the Prophethood of Muhammad but for the vast majority of them, the coming of our Prophet have only shaken them in their belief and practices.<sup>19</sup>

Then in his commentary on verse 6 of the same chapter, ‘Abd al-Murad continues in his condemnation of those who reject the prophethood of Muhammad by saying that:

those who are kafir and deny the Prophethood of Muhammad amongst the People of the Book and the polytheist, they shall dwell in hell forever. They are the most condemned of all creatures who had killed their hearts and minds from now.<sup>20</sup>

In the commentary on chapter 107,<sup>21</sup> translated as common kindnesses,<sup>22</sup> ‘Abd al-Murad continues his tirade against the Jews and Christians. Before commentating on verse 1 of the chapter, ‘Abd al-Murad gives an introduction on who are those who are against religion. Believers in the religion here are defined as those who believe in God with all His divine attributes, verify the prophethood of Muhammad and his message, and believe in the hereafter, thus specifying all other religions, especially the People of the Book, as being excluded.

To ‘Abd al-Murad, people can believe in the various tenets of Islam but still not be a proper believer, for their beliefs might make them think that only they are guided and all others who are different from them are condemned.

Many amongst the Christians, the Jews and those who worship idols during the time of our Prophet Muhammad s.a.w are those who thought that they believed in the correct religion and they are not the rejecters. They are deceived by their prayers and fasting that they have done. In actual fact they are far from their own religion!<sup>23</sup>

This consistency in blaming the Jews, Christians and polytheists is related even to today’s world. ‘Abd al-Murad asserts that, just by looking at them every day, Muslims can see how far they have deviated from their own religion. He gives examples on how they are regularly committing vices such as enslaving the weak, oppressing the poor and other practices.<sup>24</sup>

Such views on the Jews and Christians can be read in a particular manner. However, ‘Abd al-Murad keeps blurring the line between those mentioned in the Qur’ān and those in the present time, thus making the reading of the commentary especially in regards to the Other a general one, i.e. the majority of Jews and Christians should be blamed even for problems occurring in the world because they have not followed the teachings of the Prophet.

The *Tafsir Juz ‘Amma* is short with over 300 pages; as such, it has a certain appeal for many Muslims. Even though it is short and concise, it provides a certain view on other religions that is similar to the one propagated by many Islamist groups, political or otherwise.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 269-277.

<sup>22</sup> Abdel Haleem, *The Qur’an*, 439.

<sup>23</sup> Abdul Murad, *Tafsir Juz ‘Amma*, 216.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

The fact it has been republished and continues to be read by many in traditional madrasahs and even by professionals who want to be enlightened by the Qur'ān shows its relevance and contribution to the Muslim mindset in contemporary Malaysia where issues of other religions are still considered to be controversial. From the outset, *Tafsir Juz 'Amma* would do better with a proper commentator on these sensitive verses of the Qur'ān, which is more suitable in a multiracial and multi religious setting.

## TAFSIR NUR AL-IHSAN

*Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan* was written in the 1920s by Shaykh Muhammad Said ibn Umar Khatib (d. 1934) when he was in Malaya.<sup>25</sup> The author was the chief *qadhi* of the state of Kedah, which is a state in the north of present-day Malaysia. Kedah was under the unfederated Malay state system of Malaya, which was not under British colonial administration when the work was written. ibn Umar Khatib was initially educated in Patani in the south of Thailand.<sup>26</sup> He then left to further his studies in Makkah; however, details of his teachers while he was there are still open to speculation.<sup>27</sup>

### *Description*

The *tafsir's* method of interpretation mixes the various Islamic sciences such as *ḥadīth* criticism and legal or *fiqhi* approaches on the various verses of the Qur'ān interpreted by exegete.

### *Superiority of Muslims and the disobedience and fickleness of Jews in the Qur'ān*

I have analysed the text as it is used in the public sphere to demonstrate how the text is used (abused?) by speakers for their own purpose but without going against established state sanctioned interpretation. Ustaz Shamsuri Hj Ahmad was chosen as he is well-known in many mosques in the northern state of Malaysia and has a major online presence – his lectures are listened to by at least 100k viewers across two separate channels on YouTube.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Muhammad Sa'id ibn Umar Khatib, *Tafsir Nurul Ihsan beserta tahqiq dan ta'lik, Juzu' 1-3* [Commentary of Light of Perfection with Editing and Annotations, Chapters 1-3] (Kajang: Akademi Jawi Malaysia, 2020). This is the newest edition of the text edited by a group of editors comprising academics from Malaysian universities and lay scholars from Kedah government institutes in charge of affairs on Islamic religion. The project was partially funded by the Zakat Foundation of Kedah and the Islamic Foundation of Kedah. Up to the time of this paper, only volume 1 has been completed from the four original volumes of commentary.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 7. The editors believe through conjecture that he had the same teachers that were teaching in Makkah to the Malay students there. The fact he went to Cairo and Mekkah are mentioned by the editors through their interviews with Muhammad Sa'id's living descendants.

<sup>28</sup> One of his lectures was livestreamed on 12 March 2018 on two channels. The first had over 13,000 views and the second had more than 90,000 views when this article was written in August 2021. The lecture is based on Abdul Murad, *Tafsir Juz 'Amma*, vol. 2, 326. zonkita zonkuliah, "[050318] Tafsir Nurul Ihsan 2 - Ustaz Shamsuri Hj Ahmad," YouTube video, 1:20:02, posted March 12, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nioGEKXWfuQ>; Ar-RahmanTV, "Ustaz Shamsuri Ahmad - Asal Usul Kaum Bani Israel," YouTube video, 1:22:02, posted March 12, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Y7W4ZwezXc>.



This number denotes his popularity among online viewers and should not be taken lightly. With mosques closing due to the Covid-19 pandemic, YouTube plays a major role in fulfilling many Malay Muslims' thirst for religious knowledge.

Beginning with second verse of chapter 17, which discusses the Jews, Shamsuri Ahmad begins by asserting the speciality of the Bani Isra'il. They are special because they descend from Abraham and Sarah, which produced Ishaq.<sup>29</sup> From the union with Hajar, Ismail is produced. Shamsuri Ahmad then asserts that all the Bani Isra'il came solely from Ishaq's son, Yaakub (Jacob). Yaakub and his family were situated in Sham, which includes Palestine today. Shamsuri Ahmad further proceeded to advise those in attendance to visit Baitul Maqdis and al-Aqsa if they can. He says there are many pilgrimage packages that take people to tour Hebron, which is known to the Palestinian Arabs as al-Khalil and refers to the title given to Abraham as Ibrahim Khalilulallah (the friend of God). In Hebron, the story of the Bani Isra'il starts as he explains that Yaakub had 12 children and preferred Yusuf (Joseph) more than the rest. That is why in the Qur'an it is mentioned that the Jews had 12 tribes.

Shamsuri Ahmad justifies the difficulty of being fair in feelings towards that one son as Yaakub had done by quoting a tradition (*ḥadīth*) from Prophet Muhammad where the Prophet said it was possible for him to be equitable to all but in regard to feelings it was difficult. Love towards that one person is difficult because we cannot distribute love equally, as in the case of Yaakub towards Yusuf. This raises the ire of Yusuf's other siblings towards himself, which results in a conspiracy towards Yusuf. To cut a long story short, Yusuf was abandoned by his brothers but, however they plotted, God's plan turned the whole conspiracy around when Yusuf was appointed as one of the Pharaoh's ministers. Yusuf's brothers, who weren't aware that the minister was Yusuf, brought his clothes to their grieving father Yaakub, thus enabling Yaakub to be able to see again.

This descent from 12 sons brought many prophets, including Moses, Haroon, Ilyas, Ilyasak, Zakaria, Yahya, Isa and Yunus. Thus, it is not surprising that the Jews became arrogant and when Prophet Mohammad came, as an Arab and not a Jew, they could not accept him as the final Prophet.

Shamsuri Ahmad argues there was never a promise by God that the last prophet was to come from the Jews, even if all the other prophets mentioned above had come from them. This was the privilege God had given to the Jews and not to another. As a result, the Jews rejected God's commands as they rejected Prophet Muhammad on the excuse that he was not from the Jews.

He then proceeded to list the problems the Jews had; they were arrogant to the point of being stubborn: "as today we are seeing how stubborn are the present day Jews, that was how their ancestors were during the time of Moses." He gives his argument based on a reading of *surah* al-Baqarah (2:55) to prove how God had foretold of their stubbornness. The verse demonstrates how the Jews were stubborn in their response to Moses when he called them to

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

serve God: “O Moses we would never (*lan*) serve.” Here, Shamsuri Ahmad points out the fact that “*lan*” in Arabic grammar means never – in the sense of forever and eternal –thus indicating his point that they will never follow God’s guidance unless Moses can bring God to sit in front of them. Shamsuri Ahmad says, “O Moses, you don’t have to talk much, just bring your God and sit in front of us! Only then would we believe.”

Shamsuri Ahmad says, God says, “because of their stubbornness, God brings them the lightning thus killing some of them who had challenged Moses as a warning to all the others” (Qur’ān 2:55). This translation was given by Ustaz Shamsuri Hj Ahmad to his audience. He asserts that even then the Jews did not believe in Moses. Shamsuri Ahmad then rhetorically asserts that, while with God and Moses, they did not believe, “do you think they would adhere to the various agreements with the Arabs today? Nay they are stubborn.”

The second characteristic of the Jews is that they have many questions. Shamsuri Ahmad gives an example based on a story of a murder that happened in those days and how, because of it, a conflict escalated to become a war between the different Jewish tribes. To evade further escalation, they referred to Moses. Shamsuri Ahmad mentions sarcastically that even though the Jews had rejected Moses, they still referred to him to solve their problems and conflicts. Referring to *surah* al-Baqarah verse 67, Shamsuri Ahmad ingeniously tailors the interpretation to show how the Jews questioned Moses and thus God on the characteristics of the cow that was asked to be slaughtered. These many questions, Shamsuri Ahmad alleges, has made the finding of the cow more difficult and these difficulties arose because of the Jews’ character.

He then transposes the situation to today’s world where the Jews (purportedly) control big companies and corporations thus indicating their mischievous cleverness and meticulous planning, which go back to their many questions. This, however, leads to their disobedience to God. Another example is given of their many requests to Moses, i.e. in the story of when the Jews left Egypt with Moses and were wandering about the desert they requested Moses to pray to God for special food, i.e. *al-manna* (sweets) and *al-salwa* (a small bird like pigeons). These, Shamsuri Ahmad alleges, are special foods that no one had tasted before. All these requests were fulfilled by Moses thus indicating the speciality of the Jews in the eyes of God.

It is unclear how the request for survival provisions is used by Shamsuri Ahmad to argue the point that Jews are arrogant and stubborn, as the Qur’ān is silent on this episode (7:160). However, he proceeds to portray the arrogance of the Jews then and now even though God had already given them all this help.

Ustaz Shamsuri Hj Ahmad then continues his interpretation of the *surah* Isra verse 2 where God speaks of those saved by Nuh (Noah) from the floods. Shamsuri Ahmad here believes all of mankind that was on Noah’s ark were Jews and the flood killed everybody else from the sons of Adam. Such view, however, is not mentioned in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*.

Shamsuri Ahmad continues to push the point that Noah was obedient and grateful to God and the Jews were to follow this ancestor of theirs. Instead, they committed two major mistakes while in Sham. Shamsuri Ahmad is referring to the interpretation of Qur’ān 17:4,

where it is translated as, “And We warned the Children of Israel in the Scripture, ‘You will certainly cause corruption in the land twice, and you will become extremely arrogant.’” To Shamsuri Ahmad, the corruption is the killing of first Zakariya and second his son Yahya. Both were done, according to Shamsuri Ahmad, by the Jews.

There is no mention of which Jews and whether the verse is saying all Jews or just a group of them. As a result, Shamsuri Ahmad is postulating that all Jews should be blamed for actions of the few. This view is not uncommon when discussing Jews, especially if seen in the present context of the Israeli-Palestine conflict, which is close to the heart of many Muslims.

The aim of reading the interpretation of the Qur’ān according to Ustaz Shamsuri Hj Ahmad is to connect its meanings with the contemporary world, demonstrating that the stories in the Qur’ān are true and relevant. However, by being general in his interpretation of these verses towards all Jews, Shamsuri Ahmad makes them collectively guilty of all crimes committed against God and His prophets.<sup>30</sup>

This reading of the Qur’ān, with the aim of putting down the other,<sup>31</sup> is a common method used by many speakers on the Qur’ān using the interpretation available to them in Jawi script as available in *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*. The use of a book to further their subjective agenda is the norm in contemporary Malaysia as religion is institutionalised and Malay Muslims are given certain confines within which they must tailor their actions to keep being a Muslim.<sup>32</sup> Thus, making the general applicability of the criticism on other religions can be an important way of maintaining the superiority of Islam and thus Malay Muslims in the country.

Therefore, Shamsuri Ahmad, as elucidated above, shows how the various verses criticising Jews mean all Jews until the end of time. However, he fails to explain the context of this criticism to the period in question and, by bringing the present conflict of the Israeli-Palestinian into the context, Shamsuri Ahmad shows the use of Qur’ānic messages for the contemporary period albeit from an Islamist perspective on the context in question. It assumes the fault of the conflict lies merely upon the Israel without going into details. The fault lies with the Jews because their ancestors were chastised by God, as seen in the verses of the Qur’ān in *surah* 17.

The use of such contextual tools with a subjective background, i.e. Islamism, raises the question of how interpretation should really be for the public. As seen above, the *tafsir* is not at fault as it does not deal with Jews as a whole. In other words, the text does not provide modern-day context. Instead, it is the speaker’s background and their subjectivity that gives that aspect to the interpretation.

<sup>30</sup> Ustaz Shamsuri Hj Ahmad is known for his views against the Jews and Israelites much earlier than this, as seen in another talk given earlier in 2015, which to date has more than 95,000 views on YouTube. See Abu Khadijah, “Perangai Sebenar Yahud! | Ustaz Shamsuri Haji Ahmad,” YouTube video, 1:32:04, posted October 23, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oI0zT2O3xnk>.

<sup>31</sup> On the issue of Qur’ānic criticism of other religions, see Mun’im Sirry, “Reinterpreting the Quranic Criticism of other Religions,” in *Quranic Studies Today*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth and Michael Sells (London: Routledge, 2016), 294-310.

<sup>32</sup> Mohamad, *The Divine Bureaucracy and Disenchantment of Social Life*.

This hermeneutical approach towards the Qur'ān relies on the interpreter's horizon rather than on the text in question.<sup>33</sup> The text then is silent in verifying the interpretation of the speaker and instead only provides a platform through which the speaker is allowed to perform with their subjective understanding.

Therefore, this modern use of interpretation can never be neutral, i.e. the speaker is always subjective. The text as the signifier and speech as the signified are always going to be in a binary interaction.<sup>34</sup> Thus, there can never be an understanding that is pure or objective when it comes to religion. The text loses its voice entirely and is at the mercy of its interpreters. In the case of *Tafsir Nur al-Ihsan*, the *tafsir* ceases to be itself and becomes the speaker's *tafsir* as they bring their own context and background towards the understanding of the text.

The construction of the speech or interpretation will always be based on the interpreter's subjective view. So, what does the *tafsir* provide for the future of understanding Islam and Malay Muslims? Again, it provides a platform for its various approaches and interpretations. As seen in the example above, the interpretation is wholly independent of the text in study. The need of today, i.e. nationalistic tendencies, pan-Islamism in the sense of connecting with other Muslim community, e.g. the Palestinians or the speaker's understanding towards the conflict, overrides the constraints provided by the text.

In another aspect, the treatment of *tafsir* works in Malaysia tends to produce a tradition in the sense that gives authority to the *mufassir* or interpreter, or in this case the speaker. By relying on his stature as a part of the *ulama* class, the speaker tries to bring the *tafsir* to his side by using the contextual apparatus mentioned in his speech. Through the use of select *ḥadīth* traditions, demonstrating his ability to speak Arabic and use of Arabic dictionaries, the speaker builds an aura of sacredness and authenticity in his interpretation of the verses of the Qur'ān with the aim of convincing his viewers or listeners.

Max Weber has acknowledged that tradition is one of three basic sources of authority<sup>35</sup> in his work on Protestant ethic. Tradition, which consists of long-standing beliefs (religion) or practices in society, are relevant here. The speaker is tapping into that long-standing belief that all other religion is wrong in the eyes of God; thus, being a Muslim is a privilege given by God to whomever He wills. As a result of such belief and authority, the audience is convinced that all other religion is flawed and a certain upliftment is produced in the listeners' psyche.

There is no question of whether there is a different interpretation in the eyes of the listener for the speaker is trusted and part of the *ulama* class of individuals. However, this view is far from reality. Any learned individual with a learning bent would be able to see how the speaker had neglected the many different interpretation of the verses, most of all by the implication that all Jews are condemned by God in the Qur'ān.

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<sup>33</sup> A point emphasised by Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 2006), 164. See also Adis Duderija, "Toward a Scriptural Hermeneutics of Islamic Feminism," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 31, no. 2 (2015).

<sup>34</sup> See Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Oxon: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>35</sup> Mark Sedgwick, "Contextualising Salafism," *Tidsskrift for Islamforskning* 4, no. 1 (2010): 77.

Many contemporary southeast Asian Muslim scholars, such as Hamka and Quriash Shihab,<sup>36</sup> have contested such a reading of these verses and many others, all of whom have been ignored by Shamsuri Ahmad. The interpreting trend Shamsuri Ahmad used in generalising Jews and Christians as criticised in the Qur'ān is akin to orthodox interpretations of past scholars of Islam. By upholding this view or interpretation, Shamsuri Ahmad, like those orthodox interpreters of the past, aims to suppress all religions apart from Islam. This homiletic attitude is congruent with their reading of the verses of the Qur'ān, which are:

Q 3:19: Verily the right religion with God is *al-islām*. Those to whom the Book had been revealed differed among themselves only after Knowledge had come to them, competing in rivalry with one another. Whoso blasphemates against God's revelations, God is swift at reckoning.

Q 3:85: Whoever desires a religion other than *al-islām*, it shall not be accepted from him; and in the afterlife he will be among the losers.

Q 5:3: Today I have perfected your religion; and I have completed My bounty upon you; and I have sanctioned *al-islām* as your religion.<sup>37</sup>

The interpretation of these verses is used to suppress all religions apart from Islam and emphasise the salvific aspect of Islam. By upholding the interpretation of these verses to mean Islam is the only path to salvation, Shamsuri Ahmad and those like him have conveniently ignored Qur'ān 5:69: "Those who believe and those Jews, Christians and Sabians, whoever believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."

## TAFSIR PIMPINAN RAHMAN

*Tafsir Pimpinan Rahman* is perhaps the most important of all the commentaries discussed in this article, because this commentary of the Qur'ān is authorised by government religious authorities in Malaysia. Volume one was first printed in the Jawi script in 1968<sup>38</sup> and volumes two and three, also in the Jawi script, were in 1970 and 1972 respectively. It was later Romanised into modern Malay in 1980 and has to date been printed 22 times with the latest being in 2013. For the sake of this article, I only use the latest print, which is the 2013 edition.<sup>39</sup>

*Tafsir Pimpinan Rahman* is mainly associated with the work of Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohd Basmeih (d. 1996), who was the main scholar authorised to write the *tafsir* with the help of Hj Muhammad Noor bin Haji Ibrahim. Basmeih was a well-known Muslim scholar in Malaysia, who was a prolific author of various books on Islam. His early education was at al-

<sup>36</sup> Sirry, "Reinterpreting the Quranic Criticism of other Religions."

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 295.

<sup>38</sup> Checked by the then Mufti of Kelantan (eastern state in Malaysia). This is mentioned in the foreword by Najib Razak, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, in the 2013 edition.

<sup>39</sup> Abdullah bin Mohd Basmeih, trans., *Tafsir Pimpinan Rahman Kepada Pengertian al-Qur'an* (Kuala Lumpur: Darul Fikir, 2013).

Azhar University in Egypt and he was later appointed as an officer to the Islamic affairs department under the Prime Minister's department.

In the foreword to the work, Basmeih mentions the main aim for the work was ease in understanding the Qur'ān for the masses. Other exegetical works are referenced in the making of this work. The titles of eighteen exegetical works are given, which consist mainly of traditional *tafsir* works such as *Tafsir at-Tabari*, *Ibnu Kathir*, *al-Baidawi*, *al-Jalalain*, *Tafsir Gharib al-Qur'an* and *Ruh al-Ma'ani*. Missing from the list is the more nuanced but traditional *tafsir* of al-Razi.

Modern *tafsir* works referenced include *Tafsir al-Manar* by Abduh and Rashid Ridha, *Tafsir al-Maraghi*, *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim* by Mahmud Shaltut and *Tafsir fi zilal al-Qur'an* by as-Shahid Saiyid Qutb.<sup>40</sup> Although various modern or reformist exegetical works, such as by Ridha and Shaltut are referenced, *Tafsir Pimpinan Rahman* does not include their liberal views on other religions, as will be shown later.

They also refer to famous canonical books of *ḥadīth* or Muslim traditions, such as the commentary on the *Shahih al-Bukhari* the *Fath al-Bari* by al-Hafiz ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, *Shahih Muslim*, *Jami' al-Saghir*, *Sharh al-Azizi*, *Sharh al-Hiffni*, *Tuhfat al-Zakirin* by as-Shaukani and *Fath al-Rahman* by al-Maqdisi.<sup>41</sup>

*Tafsir Pimpinan Rahman* is a Malay translation of the Qur'ān commissioned by the religious institution under the government. This *tafsir* or exegetical work is minimal and appears only as footnotes to selected verses in the 114 chapters of the Qur'ān. It would be good to bear in mind the aim is to provide easy understanding of the words for the people; as such, it is not written for scholars. There is no mention of the sources of the exegesis on the select verses in each chapter. It appears the team in charge made the decision to choose exegeses that are simple for the sake of making Islam intelligible to the masses. This simplified approach is admirable; however, it lacks precision and nuances to the actual verses under exegesis. This might give the impression that what is given is the only exegesis of the verses available and is the only meaning hinted to by God in His book. This reduces the horizon of meaning to a simplified understanding. This unfortunately reduces the complexity of the verses and its meaning from the worldview of the masses or individuals who rely on it for an understanding of the Qur'ān.

Exegesis and translation of verses connected to other religions (Qur'ān 3:19):

Surely the religion (which is true and blessed) in Allah's sights is Islam. And people (Jews and Christians) who are given the book do not disagree (about Islamic religion and are adamant in not accepting it) except after it comes to them the knowledge about its truthfulness; (the disagreement is) because of envy which exist amongst them. And (remember), whoever is strongly against (kufur engkar) verses explained by God, thus know surely God is swift in His reckoning.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Basmeih, *Tafsir Pimpinan Rahman*, xv.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., xvi.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 122.

Compare this with Abdel Haleem's translation of the verses:

True Religion, in God's eyes, is Islam: [devotion to Him alone]. Those who were given the Scripture disagreed out of rivalry, only after they had been given knowledge- if anyone denies God's revelations, God is swift to take account.<sup>43</sup>

Compare this with Yusuf Ali's translation:

The Religion before God is Islam (submission to His Will): Nor did the People of the Book dissent therefrom except through envy of each other, after knowledge had come to them. But if any deny the Signs of God, God is swift in calling to account.<sup>44</sup>

It seems clear the translation is close to Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation. However, there are minor but telling differences, such as the view that the emphasis on the word '*kufur engkar*' in English translated as strongly against or deny. In Malay, *kufur* is a strong word meaning deniers in religion. People who are *kafir* in Malay also mean people who are against Islam with animosity. That people who were against the Prophet in Mekka are known in Malay as '*Kafir Musyrikin*,' translated as polytheist deniers, which denotes the kind of animosity the term *kafir* generates in Malay. However, in Arabic, the term *kafir*, which comes from k-f-r, means many things, including coverer of the truth, deniers of the truth. Being a *kafir* in Arabic does not include the same animosity as the Malay term denotes.

The use of the term *kafir* and attaching it to the People of the Book might give the impression that they are similar to the polytheists of Mekka who rejected the Prophet's message and waged war against him.

In the following verse of the same chapter (3:21), the Malay commentary is clear in identifying the Jews as *kafir*:

Surely those who are strongly denying (*kufur engkar*) of God's verses, and killing Prophets through a wrongful way [A], with killing those who call the people to be just, then convey to them the news that will bring them joy [B], with God's painful punishment.<sup>45</sup>

The commentary or exegesis at A is: "The Kafir who falsify God's sayings and kill the Prophets unjustly are the Jews. They are the ones who killed Zakariyya (Zacharia) and Yahya (John) with a few other Prophets who were sent by God to them."<sup>46</sup>

The exegesis at B reiterates this: "the words which bring them joy is a God mocking the evil Kafir Jew. Because the news of God's punishment for them is not bringing them joy but sadness and curse upon them."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an*, 35.

<sup>44</sup> Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Quran, Translation and Commentary* (Durban, South Africa: Islamic Propagation Centre International, 1946), 126-7.

<sup>45</sup> Basmeih, *Tafsir Pimpinan Rahman*, 123.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, fn 111.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, fn 112.

This exegesis on the verse gives the impression that the Jews are *kafir* and a group of envious and murderous sycophants who had killed prophets in the past. Let us now compare the translation of these verses to Abdel Haleem's and Yusuf Ali's translations.

- Abdel Haleem's translation: "Give news of agonizing torment to those who ignore God's revelations, who unjustifiably kill prophets, who kill those who command that justice is done."<sup>48</sup>
- Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation: "As to those who deny The Signs of God, and in defiance Of right, slay the prophets, And slay those who teach Just dealing with mankind, Announce to them a grievous penalty."<sup>49</sup>

Abdullah Yusuf Ali includes in his commentary on the verse by stating the name of Prophet Zacharias and John who were slain at the altar by quoting from the book of Matthew in the New Testament.<sup>50</sup>

The intention of *Tafsir Pimpinan Rahman* of making people understand the Qur'ān through the use of simple language, which includes minimal explanation of the exegesis of the verses, provides a certain conception that all other religions apart from Islam are in the wrong if not bordering on *kufr*.

For example, in the translation of verses 68-69 from the fifth chapter of the Qur'ān where the People of the Book are told to follow their religion, the translation includes in brackets, "that will bring you to believe in Prophet Muhammad" whereas the verse does not mention Muhammad at all. Qur'ān 5:68:

Say, "O People of the Book, you will not be regarded as having a religion until you uphold the teachings of the Torat and the Bible (that will bring you to believe in Prophet Muhammad) and what has been brought down to you from your God (i.e. the Qur'ān). And surely what has been brought down to you (O Muhammad) from your Lord will increase the enmity and deniers in many of them. Therefore do not sorrow against those who are the kafirin."<sup>51</sup>

It is clear the translation of this verse describes the People of the Book as not having religion until they upheld the teachings of their books, which according to the Malay translation, will bring them to belief in the prophethood of Muhammad. The use of brackets adds to the verse as it does not mention this explicitly nor implicitly.

It gives the impression that the People of the Book rejected their books because they mention the prophethood of Muhammad. For this they are the deniers or *kafirin*. As we shall see, this is unlike the translations given by Abdel Haleem and Yusuf Ali on the said verses.

- Abdel Haleem's translation: "Say, 'People of the Book, you have no true basis [for your religion] unless you uphold the Torah, the Gospel, and that which has been sent down to you from your Lord,' but what has been sent down to you [Prophet] from your

<sup>48</sup> Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an*, 36.

<sup>49</sup> Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Quran*, 128.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., fn 364.

<sup>51</sup> Basmeih, *Tafsir Pimpinan Rahman*, 268.



Lord is sure to increase many of them in their insolence and defiance: do not worry about those who defy [God].”<sup>52</sup>

- Abdullah Yusuf Ali’s translation: “Say: ‘O People of the Book! ye have no ground to stand upon unless ye stand fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord.’ It is the revelation that cometh to thee from thy Lord, that increaseth in most of them their obstinate rebellion and blasphemy. But sorrow thou not over (these) people without Faith.”<sup>53</sup>

Abdel Haleem does not mention the Jews and Christians as having no faith as the Malay exegesis has done above.

Yusuf Ali’s exegesis of the verse does not mention the Jews as having no faith, unlike the Malay translation above. In his exegesis, Yusuf Ali gives the example that Moses was told not to sorrow for those who rebelled against his teachings during his lifetime as Mohammad is told not to sorrow for those having no faith.<sup>54</sup>

This does not mean the People of the Book do not have religion or faith if they do not believe in Muhammad, as the Malay exegesis implies above.

The translation and exegesis of the next verse, i.e. 5:69, reiterates this further. The Malay translation:

Surely those who believe, and the Jews, Sabi’in and the Christians, whoever amongst them who believe in God (and all His Prophets including Prophet Muhammad s.a.w.) and (belief to) the day of Judgment and do good works, there is no fear (from the occurrence of bad events) to them, and to them there is no sorrow.<sup>55</sup>

Again, the exegesis is included in the form of brackets and there is an addition to the wording of the verse to include “and all His Prophets including Prophet Muhammad s.a.w.,” which is not mentioned in the verse.

- Abdel Haleem’s translation: “For the [Muslim] believers, the Jews, the Sabians, and the Christians- those who believe in God and the Last Day and do good deeds- there is no fear: they will not grieve.”<sup>56</sup>
- And Yusuf Ali’s translation: “Those who believe (in the Qur’an), those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Sabians and the Christians – any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness – on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.”<sup>57</sup>

Abdullah Yusuf Ali’s exegesis of the verse provides a liberal understanding towards other religion, which is missing in the translation and exegesis of *Tafsir Pimpinan Rahman*. To

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<sup>52</sup> Abdel Haleem, *The Qur’an*, 74.

<sup>53</sup> Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Quran*, 265.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., fn 778.

<sup>55</sup> Basmeih, *Tafsir Pimpinan Rahman*, 269.

<sup>56</sup> Abdel Haleem, *The Qur’an*, 74.

<sup>57</sup> Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Quran*, 265.

Yusuf Ali, Allah “recognises the true faith in other forms provided that they are sincere and supported by reason.”<sup>58</sup>

This openness towards pluralism in the acceptance of other religions is also mentioned in verse 62 of the second chapter. If we look at *Tafsir Pimpinan Rahman*, we also get the same idea; however, the exegesis includes belief in Prophet Muhammad as a requisite to acceptance in front of God.<sup>59</sup>

Verse 62 includes an exegesis in *Tafsir Pimpinan Rahman*, which for this paper is translated as:

Surely those who are believers, and the Jews, and the Christians and the Sabi’ in and those amongst them who belief in God, the Last Day and do righteous works, for them are rewards from their Lord, and they shall have no fear (from the occurrence of bad things) to them and to them shall be no sorrow.<sup>60</sup>

The exegesis from *Tafsir Pimpinan Rahman*:

Meaning of “belief in God” here is the belief which includes the belief in all the Prophets who were sent by God from Adam (a.s.) to Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. Clearly, the Jews, Christians, Sabi’ in and whoever existed during the time of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) or those who came after them, those who do not believe in Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) and the Islamic religion that he brings, surely they remain as kafir.<sup>61</sup>

It is clear from the above translation and exegesis that the idea of Islam as an exclusive religion is pushed forward as the correct and true meaning of the verse in question.

It is interesting that Abdel Haleem to some extent<sup>62</sup> and Abdullah Yusuf Ali do not agree with this view for they do not subscribe to such an exclusivist look of Islam. Yusuf Ali regards Islam as the name of a religion that teaches belief in God and the last Day, and whoever does good deeds after believing in such tenets is allowed to receive rewards from God.

As Yusuf Ali points out quite eloquently,

The point of the verse is that Islam does not teach an exclusive doctrine, and is not meant exclusively for one people...Islam existed before the preaching of Muhammad on this earth: the Qur’ān expressly calls Abraham a Muslim (3:67). Its teaching (submission to God’s will) has been and will be the teaching of the Religion for all time and for all people.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., fn 779.

<sup>59</sup> Basmeih, *Tafsir Pimpinan Rahman*.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., fn 32.

<sup>62</sup> Abdel Haleem, *The Qur’an*, 9.

<sup>63</sup> Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Quran*, 34.

## CONCLUSION

The exegesis of the Qur'ān in Malay has been an active and dynamic process since the coming of Islam in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In the case of Malaysia, the Qur'ān has been authorised to be translated and its exegesis produced since the 1960s. Even though the exegesis has been promoted by state actors and local independent Islamist actors, the exegesis tends to preserve certain traditional and orthodox tendencies, especially when it comes to the perception of other religions. However, the state and local actors have an almost exclusivist attitude towards the Islamic religion and believe all other religions are *kafir*. This attitude is prevalent in the chosen texts and an example of a non-state actor is analysed in this paper.

A pluralist understanding or inclusive view towards other religions regarding these select exegetical works on the Qur'ān is not found. This, however, does not mean they do not exist as many modern Muslim scholars locally and beyond the Malay world have in their own exegeses propagated this view. International Muslim scholars such as Mahmoud Ayoub, in his exegesis of the Qur'ān has termed it a liberal and moderating voice calling for a pluralist understanding of religions.<sup>64</sup> Local scholars writing in Malay, namely Hamka, have propagated the inclusive view in his exegesis called *Tafsir al-Azhar* since the 1960s. Hamka was not alone as a more recent Muslim scholar, Quraish Shihab, has done the same in his exegetical work on the Qur'ān called *Tafsir al-Misbah*.<sup>65</sup>

The teachings of the Qur'ān had to be controlled by the state and this article has given a glimpse of how that was done via analysis of three exegetical works. The creation of a conservative Malay Muslim who is proud of their Muslim identity as propagated by official state sanctioned religious institution seems to be the aim when we look at how these exegeses have been taught to the masses.

The reading and exegesis of the Qur'ān can be open and inclusive towards other religions but due to various reasons hinted at in this article, state actors tend to minimise this understanding and instead insert their views on the text to be translated. As a result, it may create a misconception about other religions that is not sanctioned by the Qur'ān, as is seen above.

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<sup>64</sup> See Sirry, "Reinterpreting the Quranic Criticisms of other Religions," 295.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 300. A section of *Tafsir al-Misbah* is in Nasir, *Quranic Exegesis in Southeast Asia*.

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