

A Christian Perspective on Explorations of Shared Narrative of Religions and Its Significance to Islamic Studies, Islamic Thought, and Well Living

Abraham Silo Wilar

Programme Executive Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation World Council of Churches, Swiss
abraham.wilar@wcc.coe.org

Abstract

This paper discusses the shared narrative of religions to Islamic Studies and Islamic Thought to find its content and relate it to the two fields to conduct research in the broader context. In discussing the proposed topic, two approaches are taken from two academic disciplines, history, and theology. The approaches are historical trajectory and theology comparative. Each offers its way to deal with the topic to generate certain knowledge of the topic related to the fields and beyond. The topic offers *Melek Agama* (religious literacy) and well-living as its important consequences possible to offer to the public to make religion a source and contributor to the development of social order and well living. To describe what is stated above, it started by discussing the two approaches to the shared narrative of religions. This discussion is designed as a theoretical platform where its contents may be implicitly seen. Then, the researcher address application of its contents.

Keywords: *Shared Narrative Religions, Islamic Studies, Islamic Thought*

Abstrak

Tulisan ini membahas tentang berbagi narasi agama untuk Studi Islam dan Pemikiran Islam untuk menemukan isinya dan mengaitkannya dengan kedua bidang tersebut untuk melakukan penelitian dalam konteks yang lebih luas. Dalam membahas topik yang diajukan, diambil dua pendekatan dari dua disiplin ilmu, sejarah, dan teologi. Pendekatannya adalah lintasan sejarah dan perbandingan teologi. Masing-masing menawarkan caranya untuk menangani topik untuk menghasilkan pengetahuan tertentu tentang topik yang terkait dengan bidang dan seterusnya. Topik tersebut menawarkan melek agama dan kehidupan yang layak sebagai konsekuensi penting yang mungkin ditawarkan kepada publik untuk menjadikan agama sebagai sumber dan kontributor bagi pengembangan tatanan sosial dan kehidupan yang sejahtera. Untuk menggambarkan apa yang dikemukakan di atas, dimulai dengan membahas dua pendekatan terhadap narasi bersama agama-agama. Diskusi ini dirancang sebagai platform teoritis di mana isinya dapat dilihat secara implisit. Kemudian, peneliti membahas penerapan isinya.

Kata Kunci: *Agama Narasi Bersama, Studi Islam, Pemikiran Islam*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic studies and thought are a complex area consisting of layers of generation, resources, schools of thought, methods, polemics, and authorities. This complexity occurs even in one topic, such as the study of the Qur'an. For instance, the study of the Qur'an may be divided into two groups of actors conducting the study: erudite Muslim scholars and industrious non-Muslim scholars who are commonly grouped in a community of Islam scholars called "the Orientalists." Each group of scholars has been generating profound and severe publications on the subject ranging from its

history to linguistic style and from its usage for the spiritual manner to the historical religious environment where it first appears. However, as the writer noticed, the reception of the publications of those scholars' works within Muslim communities might have been slightly different. It is because the works of the Orientalists are often seen as less Islamic than those of Muslim scholars. In this regard, the work of Edward Said entitled *Orientalism* (1979), which seems to have articulated controversy brought by the Orientalists in a critically and academically superb work, is worth mentioning.

However, the complexity mentioned above is not the only one in the studies. There has been another area that might contribute to making the studies more complex than ever. The area talked about is the impact of the studies on the development of social order in which the well-living of many people is primarily concerned. This concern is based on the PEW Research on countries where religions are considered important to the citizens. The PEW Research may be seen in the following chart.

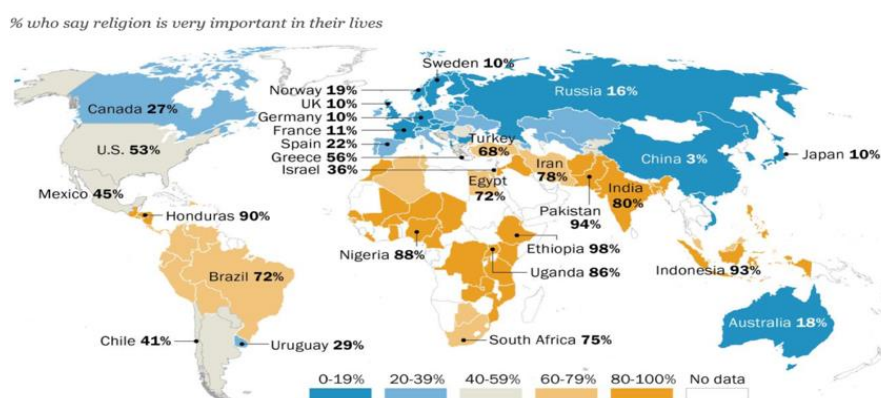


Figure 1. The Chart of the Importance of Religion in Africa, Middle East, South Asia, and Latin America¹

The chart displays countries such as Indonesia (93%), Pakistan (94%), and Ethiopia (98%) as presenting citizens of those countries which take religion as an essential thing in their life. In contrast, the PEW research also conveys countries such as Japan (10%), China (3%), and Sweden (10%) as examples presenting citizens of the countries that think religion is an unimportant thing in their life.²

It is also complicated to see the connection between the importance or unimportance of religion in one religion and the creation of well living in each country's social, economic, psychological, or spiritual life. In making such a complication, Sweden, as an example of the less

¹ <https://www.pewforum.org/2018/06/13/how-religious-commitment-varies-by-country-among-people-of-all-ages/>. Accessed April 30, 2021.

² Wilar, Abraham Silo. 2021. *Melek Agama sebagai Pendekatan untuk membangun budaya damai di agama*. ICRP Webinar Material. Unpublished.

important religion in the country, shows the well-living of its citizens in social and economic life. However, the country has also shown us the rise of Islamophobia among its citizens, which appeared in Malmo on August 28, 2020.³

Likewise, the Pakistanis have an enormous wealth of spiritual life in Islamic teaching as their country has a 94% high percentage of its citizens, considering the importance of religion. But, the country has suffered extreme religious life in the form of severe threats to minority groups, such as banning the Ahmadiyya group since the 1980-s. This kind of suffering directs us to notice the lack of spiritual life to contribute to well living social life while the country is filled with an enormous wealth of spiritual life rooted in Islam. These two examples coming from Sweden and Pakistan seem to suggest two things. First, the importance of well-living in the psychological and spiritual dimensions is desperately needed to complement well-being in social and economic life. It seems relevant to countries like Sweden. Second, the importance of well-living in psychological and spiritual dimensions may become a platform on which the well-living in the economy and social life is constructed. In this regard, the proposed research is to bring the shared narrative of religions as a contributing factor to spiritual and psychological well-being.

Within this specific circumstance, the writer argued that the shared narrative of religions, which will be discussed with the specific approaches, might become a way to engage the studies differently, and the approaches the writer employed to discuss it might lead the studies to contribute to well living. The approaches employed in this paper are historical trajectory and comparative theology. These two approaches to addressing the shared narrative of religions are rooted in two disciplines of knowledge: history and theology. To pursue the two objectives, the following steps were taken. First was discussing the relationship between the shared narrative of religions and the two approaches. It serves as a theoretical platform for the paper, describing the shared narrative of religion, its content, and how it is related to the studies. The second was disclosing ingredients conceived in the approaches and showing how the ingredients help the studies to contribute to well-living.

DISCUSSION

A Theoretical Discussion on the Approaches and the Shared Narrative of Religion: Shared Narrative of Religions, Historical Trajectory, and Comparative Theory

³ <https://www.euronews.com/2020/09/04/anti-islam-protests-in-sweden-and-norway-spark-debate-on-free-speech>

The shared Narrative of Religions refers to similar elements of religions. For instance, as has been researched by many scholars, each religion has its origin, and developments, explaining the context of its advent and development of each religion. In the case of Islamic studies and Islamic thought, the shared narrative which may be easily noticed is the presence of Biblical figures in the Qur'an. The works of Gabriel Sayd Reynolds and Roberto Tottoli might be mentioned as examples of scholars dealing with the figures. On the other side, the work of Abu Ishaq Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ibrāhīm al-Tha'labī entitled *'Arā'is al-Majālis fi Qisas al-Anbiyā* may become an example of a discussion on the figures conducted by a Muslim scholar. In addition to those works, Mahmoud Ayoub's work on 'Uzayr, a Biblical profile that exists in the Qur'an and Muslim tradition, and Shari L. Lowin's work on "the Making of a forefather: Abraham and in Islamic and Jewish Exegetical Narratives"⁴ are worth to mention.

Through the examples, the shared narrative of religions, which occurs within the Abrahamic religions, might be perceived as a natural phenomenon as people of the three religions naturally live in a sacred geography that they share. Even though it is natural to the people, it does not necessarily mean that that is just as simple as "matching one religion to another." Rather, it deals with three elements of religion that disclose its depth and historicity. And to disclose the elements, historical trajectory, and comparative theology used in the paper to help disclose it.

The definition of historical trajectory is related to a specific line of history in which religion is part and being part of the line that occurred in the religion is to compose the content of the line of history. So, none of the religious events and doctrines are located in the outer part of history. And being part of history, the narrative is to compose its content. The function of the historical trajectory as a scholarly approach has been shown in several works that currently use it to investigate theological issues in Christianity. Charlene P. E. Burns' work entitled *Christian Understandings of Evil: The Historical Trajectory*⁵; Amy Frykholm's book on *Christian Understandings of the Future: The Historical Trajectory*⁶; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen's work on *Christian Understanding of the Trinity: The Historical Trajectory*⁷; and Denis Edwards' book entitled *Christian Understandings of Creation: The Historical Trajectory*. In each book, the historical trajectory usage as an academic approach is related to the division of history into a period of time and the content of the period. Both are related to one another, for the periodization of history is obviously about paradigm or theory used to understand

⁴ Shari L. Lowin. 2006. *The Making of a Forefather: Abraham in Islamic and Jewish Exegetical Narratives*. Brill: University of Virginia.

⁵ Charlene P. E. Burns. 2016. *Christian Understandings of Evil: The Historical Trajectory*. UK: Fortress Press.

⁶ Amy Frykholm. 2016. *Christian Understandings of the Future: The Historical Trajectory*. UK: Fortress Press.

⁷ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen. 2017. *Christian Understanding of the Trinity: The Historical Trajectory*. UK: Fortress Press.

the history and its content. Such comprehension of the historical trajectory provides me an academic ground to carry out an academic discussion on the shared narrative of religions intending to show three things constitutive to religion: Constitutive content, Constitutive Phase, and Constitutive Process. These three divisions of the constitutive help form religion from the beginning to contemporary form and describe the form following the historical trajectory.

Historical trajectory provides a framework to see religion as a complex phenomenon. And the complexity of religions is presented in various disciplines of knowledge by mentioning a well-documented of it in the book by Dominic Corrywright and Peggy Morgan, whose title is *Get Set for Religions Studies*.⁸ In that book, Corrywright and Morgan mention the disciplines of knowledge, such as theology, phenomenology, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, and psychology, which deal with and discuss religion, exposing the complexity of religion in each discipline. Additionally, I also noted in my cited work above the work of Nicholas Jay Demerath III entitled *Crossing the Gods: World Religions and Worldly Politics*⁹ as presenting the involvement of God in worldly politics, suggesting that religions seem to have been not separated yet from politics as this hard fact might be easily found in countries located in different continents such as Latin America countries, Western European countries, Middle East countries, South Asia countries and South East Asia countries. The framework is a visible and invisible aspect of religion from this complexity. This framework is helpful to see which aspects of religions are dealt with by people of faith and scholars of religions and to better understand the aspects of daily life practices of the people and the connection of one aspect to one another. For instance, the biblical figures in the Qur'an have each aspect at once. While the visible aspect of religion is presented in the figures mentioned in both traditions, suggesting the religions as part of the Abrahamic religion, the invisible aspect of religion in this example is related to the Supreme Being that exists in the Abrahamic religion which is experienced in different religious traditions in the Abrahamic religion.

Explaining the presence of those aspects, an iceberg is used as an illustration in which its upper part, referring to the surface of the water sea to the top of the iceberg, is to describe a visible aspect of religion. Its lower part refers to the below part of the water sea surface. It represents the invisible aspect of religion, which is identified as presenting the Deep Religion of the religions. Each religion of the Abrahamic religions has its Deep Religion: the Supreme Being. The Deep Religion starts to exist and continues among the adherents throughout history. And the religious

⁸ Abraham Silo Wilar. 2021. An Exercise of Doing Contextual- Constructive Theology with(in) Other Religions Utilizing Shared Narrative of Religions. STFT Jakarta. Unpublished

⁹ Nicholas Jay Demerath III. 2001. *Crossing the Gods: World Religions and Worldly Politics*. Rutgers University Press.

environment has been part of the period of history. So, in other words, the Deep Religion of any religion starts to appear and continues to exist within the religious environment of the existing religion. The Sacred, the Supreme Being, and other calling names are designed to be a working definition of what religion refers to as God. With historical trajectory, the writer underlined that God in the Abrahamic religions is understood as a “historical being,” which means God’s presence and works within the history of human beings are underlined in the Abrahamic religions, so God has the beginning background. This understanding of God as a historical being does not negate and nullify the belief in the power of God that is held up by people of the Abrahamic religions but is to emphasize the historicity of God. To clarify, the writer addressed God in Judaism as a sample of discussion on it. God of Judaism is portrayed as a unique God who is the Creator and the Sustainer of this world¹⁰. In Judaism, God is known as YHWH, whose Holiness must be upheld by the Jewish communities. And to uphold His Holiness, the adherents of Judaism are extremely prohibited from calling God YHWH as it is believed to have been the calling name of the God of Judaism. Hence, they invent *Adonay* as a calling name of YHWH. It is simply an example of the unique portrait of God in Judaism and the appropriate way to behave before God following that uniqueness.

This uniqueness does not negate the fact that YHWH is God whose existence has the beginning background. In the work of John Day entitled *YHWH and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*, John points out the society of Canaan as the historical site giving birth to YHWH. Within this site, the Canaanites are described as people worshipping El, their Supreme Being. And El is also popular in the neighborhood of the Canaanites. So, the Canaanites worshipped El, and within this religious environment of the Canaanites, YHWH came into being as the Supreme God of the Jewish communities. Interestingly, Day informs us that the usage of El for describing the God of the Canaanites is also applied to call the God of Judaism. In other words, Day says that YHWH had been named El, the God of the Canaanites, as the book of Job clearly showed the usage of the word El to call YHWH the God of Judaism.¹¹

¹⁰ Abraham Silo Wilar. 2014. *Saudara Dekat yang Jauh, atau Saudara Jauh yang dekat ?* Binsar J. Pakpahan (Editor), The Journey of All Rowing: Book 2 65 Years of Pdt. Einar M. Sitompul. Jakarta: UPI STFT Jakarta.

¹¹ John Day. 2002. *YHWH and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*. Sheffield Academic Press.

קֹרֶה אֵל שְׂגִיָּא וְלֹא נִדְעָ מִסְפָּר שָׁנָיו וְלֹא-חִקְרָה:

Transliteration	Translation
קֹרֶה hen-	Behold
אֵל 'el	God [is]
שְׂגִיָּא gî	great
וְלֹא wə-lō	and not
נִדְעָ nê-dā'	we do know [Him]
מִסְפָּר mis-par	the number
שָׁנָיו šā-nāw	of His years
וְלֹא- wə-lō-	nor
חִקְרָה: hê-qer.	can [be] discovered

Source: <https://biblehub.com/text/job/36-26.htm>.¹²

Quite similar to the God of Judaism, the God of Christianity also has a beginning background. Within the work of Thompson L. Thompson, entitled *The Messiah Myth: The Near*

¹² <https://biblehub.com/text/job/36-26.htm>. Accessed on May 20, 2021.

Eastern Roots of Jesus and David, the beginning background of Christian God might be found. In this book Thompson found that the idea of Jesus the Messiah among Christians is rooted in the Near Eastern concept of Messiah. Thompson especially noted the Egyptian and Babylonian concepts of the Messiah, which were popular among the Jews. The Jews who followed Jesus and inherited the concept had adopted and adapted the concept to Jesus, making Jesus the Messiah.¹³ Likewise, M David Litwa's book *Iesus Deus: The Early Christian Depiction of Jesus as Mediterranean God*¹⁴ mentions that the people of the Mediterranean had known *Iesus Deus* as describing the Godhead of Jesus among the Gods of the Mediterranean people.

Besides the Godhead of Jesus as God of the Mediterranean people, Jesus' Godhead is also known as the Triune God, who seems to have had the beginning background of the Rome religion. This religion of Romans had been known as having the Archaic Triad rooted in Jupiter, Mars, and Quirinus as the Great Gods of the Triad. In the Roman religion, Georges Dumézil states that the Three Archaic Triad of the Great Gods has a different function from one another—and this reminds the Indo-Europeans to describe God whose appearances and functions are related to the local belief of the Romans. And by mentioning Dumézil's research, it pointed out –and highlighted—that the religious environment of Christianity is Romano-Judeo. Hence, Judaism and Roman religion influenced the concept of deity in Christianity.¹⁵

In this regard, the approach may also be used in the context of Islamic God, so it is better to mention the religious environment of Islam as the start to explore it. And the religious environment of Islam the writer specifically highlighted is Judeo-Cristiano, within which Islam starts to evolve the beginning background and development of its deity. Holger Gzella's research, describing Aramaic as a spoken language on the Near East soil, shows that it has various dialects or sub-classifications and developments from the Old Aramaic to Syriac language among the Aramaic speakers.¹⁶ Some publicly known classifications are Edessan, Palmyrene, and Hatran, and a more common classification is the Western Aramaic, and the Eastern Aramaic. In this regard, the language was the source of the birth of the Old Syriac language for the latter had been invented as a derivation of the former.

During its dominant period, Arabic had not yet been a written language among the people. Of the influences important to mention is what Christoph Luxenberg has written about its impact on prophet Muhammad in his book *The Syriac-Aramaic Reading of the Koran*, Luxenberg writes that it

¹³ Thomas Thompson. 2009. *The Messiah Myth: The Near Eastern Roots of Jesus and David*. Basic Books.

¹⁴ M. David Litwa. 2014. *Iesus Deus: The Early Christian Depiction of Jesus as Mediterranean God*. UK: Fortress Press.

¹⁵ Dumézil, Georges. 1974. *La Religion Romaine Archaïque avec un appendice sur la religion des Etrusques*. Paris: Payot.

¹⁶ Holger Gzella. 1974. *A cultural history of Aramaic: from the beginnings to the advent of Islam*. Brill.

is said that the prophet Muhammad had once ordered his secretary Zayd bin Thabit to learn Aramaic to help the prophet to read Aramaic literature. Luxenberg mentions at- Tabaqāt al Kubra of Ibn Sa'd az-Zuhrī (d.230. H/845 AD) as his reference to the prophet's order to Zayd bin Thabit.¹⁷

In addition to Luxenberg's work, the work of Alphonse Mingana entitled *Syriac Influence on the style of the Koran*, in which he shows plenty of examples of the influence, is worth mentioning. In his work, he gives information about the word *Rum* employed in Qs.30, Surah Ar-Rum, believed to have originated in the Syriac word *Rūmāya*.¹⁸ There are more examples mentioned in his work. Suffice to mention the two examples from the works of Luxenberg and Mingana.

Under the influences of the Aramaic language as the cultural milieu of the people, the Supreme Being in Islam, called Allah, came into being. Concerning this, Richard Bell in his book entitled *The Origin of Islam in Its Christian Environment*, informs us that it is believed that the proper name of Allah, the Supreme Being of Islam, came from the Syriac word *Alābā*. His thought of this is based explicitly on Christianity's religious environment that became Islam's historical background. On the other side, Islam is also believed to have shared the religious environment of Judaism as its historical background, so it is important to allude to this aspect in the following.¹⁹

Regarding the Judaic background of Islamic God, the writer found the work of Denise Masson entitled *Le Coran et la Révélation Judéo- Chrétienne: Etudes Comparées*²⁰, stating that the picture of Judaic God as a unique being as the Creator of the World, the Sustainer of the World, and the Revealing God through revelations are used to portray the Islamic God. This simple fact is, again, to show the religious environment where the Islamic God came into being as historical background. The discussion as mentioned above, on the religious environment of Judeo-Cristiano as the background to address the existence of Islamic God, is simply the application of historical trajectory. And this application is purposive activity to show the historical background of where the Deep Religion of Islam came into being and experienced by adherents of Islam.

In Constitutive Phase, Five Phases are shared by religions, including the Abrahamic religions. The first phase is the pre-existence of religions. It is believed that one religion appears to exist among its adherents within a certain period of time, so this belief seems to implicitly suggest that there is a time of pre-existence in which the existence of religion is unknown, for it has not come to exist yet. For instance, the religion of Jewish people called Judaism is commonly said to

¹⁷ Christoph Luxenberg. 2007. *The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran*. Germany: Verlag Hans Schiler.

¹⁸ Alphonse Mingana. 1927. "Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kur'an." *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Manchester: Universtiy Press, Longsmans, Green, & Co. London, England, Vol.11, No.1, 77-98.

¹⁹ Richard Bell. 1968. *The Origin of Islam in Its Christian Environment*. Routledge.

²⁰ Denise Masson. 1957. *Le Coran et la Révélation Judéo- Chrétienne : Etudes Comparées*. Paris: Libraire D' Amerique et D' Orient Adrien-Maissonneuve.

have appeared during the 6 Century BCE-70 CE. So, Judaism has not yet existed before 6 Century BCE. Or, it does not yet exist during the Triassic period when dinosaurs are still on this earth.

The second phase is the existence of religion. This phase is to describe the period of time during which religion starts to appear. As mentioned earlier, the writer quoted Eliade that the presence of the Deep Religion might be identified through symbols, myth, and rituals, narrating its presence among its adherents. So, those are profane vessels of communicating the Deep Religion among its adherents and the Deep Religion to the presence among the adherents. So, the beginning of it may be noticed in narratives communicating its existence in the earliest time. In this regard, it takes a narrative describing the origin of YHWH among the adherents of Judaism as discussed in the book of John Day. In his book, Day's research investigates the origin and development of YHWH as the Deep Religion of Judaism. He finds narratives about YHWH of *Temam* or *Shasu YHWH* in Egyptian texts to suggest that the origin of YHWH is the land of Egyptians. However, Day seems to have preferred the origin of YHWH as the Deep Religion of Judaism in the Canaanite society and its Gods and Goddesses. His preference for the Canaanites, instead of the Egyptians, is based on the usage of El, the Deep Religion of the Canaanites, in many parts of the Hebrew Scriptures. For instance, Day points out the usage of El Shaddai (God the Almighty), El Olam (God the Everlasting), El Betel (God of The House of God), and El Elyon (God the Highest) to describe YHWH but the word El is the Supreme Being of the Canaanites. Likewise, Christianity and Islam share this like their older sibling, Judaism. Christianity, for instance, has Judeo-Romano as the context of its Deep Religion, so it has influenced the appearance and experience of the Deep Religion among Christians. And Islam, likewise, has Judeo- a Cristiano background of its Deep Religion.²¹

The third phase is authority and dominance of religion. It refers to the evolvement layers of Deep Religion among its adherents to become an authoritative orthodoxy that dominates the adherents. The orthodoxy is constructed into canonized dogma, rituals, and so forth. To make up the orthodoxy, historical triggers are happening before it is made up. In this regard, the work of Shahab Ahmed entitled *Before Orthodoxy: The Satanic Verses in Early Islam* is important to notice. In the book, he investigates the changing reception of the Satanic Verses from “true incident” among Muslims of Early Islam to “untrue incident” among Muslims of contemporary Islam. And the change, to Ahmed's understanding, is mainly related to describing the process of making the orthodoxy of Islam, during which the Satanic Verses is one of the triggers to make it up. In the

²¹ John Day. 2002. *YHWH and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*. Sheffield Academic Press.

book, for instance, Ahmed investigates the earliest sources such as *riwāyah* from Muhammad Ka'b al-Qurazi, *riwāyah* from 'Urwah b al-Zubayr, *riwāyah* from al Suddī, *riwāyah* from Muhammad al-Sā'ib al-Kalbī, *riwāyah* from Qatādah bin Di'āmah, and so forth to answer his questions on transmission of the narrative such as: When were narratives of the Satanic verses incident transmitted and circulated in the early Muslim community? How widely circulated were these narratives? Who circulated and accepted the narratives in circulation? Who did not accept and circulate them? Ahmed also raises questions about the content of the narratives. And his questions are what was the textual content of these narratives? What do the narratives of the Satanic verses incident tell us about the understanding of Muhammad and his prophethood in the early Muslim community? At last, he questions the transmission and the content. His question is, what do the identity and nature of the genres, projects, and practitioners who accepted and rejected the reports tell us about the understanding of Muhammad and his prophethood in the early Muslim community?²²

Similarly, Judaism and Christianity also have this process of orthodoxy ranging from the canonization of the Scripture to the dogmas and rituals. For instance, the earliest generation of Christians is the early followers of Jesus coming from the Jewish communities. They are often called Jewish Christians. Concerning this Jewish Christian group, Jean Danielou's book *Théologie du Judeo-Christianisme* describes the significant role of the group in making Jesus the Messiah and Jesus the center of their life. To my understanding, this group had done tremendous heritage for Christian generations after the group left "Christo-centric" as a religious paradigm to describe Christ and the world with the paradigm. And, related to this section, the Jewish Christians made the early layer of Christian orthodoxy foundation. This paradigm is clearly expressed in Henri Desroche's commentary on Danielou's book. In his commentary, Desroche underlines three important things brought by Danielou. First, faith in Christ is at the center of thinking of or interpreting the Judaic traditions on apocalyptic. Second, by making Christ at the center, it becomes a paradigm called Christ-centric, used to build doctrines. Third, the paradigm motivates the group to become actors of living culture (Henri Desroche, *Archives des Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 1958,170-171). Besides the role of the early generation of Jews, Christians, and Muslims in making up their beliefs authoritative, it is important to note the role of the political entities to make it becomes dominating in larger communities. These political entities are called caliphates, sultanates, kings, and presidents. In the case of Judaism, the division of great Israel into two kingdoms: the North Kingdom (The

²² Shahab Ahmed.2017.*BeforeOrthodoxy:TheSatanicVersesinEarlyIslam*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Israel Kingdom), and the South Kingdom (The Judea Kingdom) is believed to have occurred in 8-9 BCE. These two kingdoms are well documented in the book Kings 11: 1-13; 26-43 and widely known that before the establishment of the monarchy system among the Israelites, they are said to have been pilgrimages whose leadership among them was simpler than that of the life under the kingdoms times. However, the people wanted to have kingdoms, so they had kingdoms. And the kingdoms help make Judaism more authoritative and dominant to its adherents. Likewise, Christians who lived before Constantine's conversion in 313 had bleak experiences living in the Pax Romana reigned by its Emperors. However, when the conversion came to happen, Christians commenced living as free as birds, for the Roman Emperor Constantine (306-337) had become the patron of Christianity. And this obvious example of how the political body's role in making religion both authoritative and dominating is also true for Muslim communities that witness the significant role of caliphs in that making process.

The fourth phase is religion decline. In the case of Christianity, the dominion of Christianity over the state, as shown in Emperor Constantine's period, is now no longer the reality. Even before Christianity became an acknowledged religion in Constantine's time, Christianity which had dominantly occupied the Near East, had to decline in its birthplace. This declination of religion may also be found in Judaism. For instance, the conquest of the Babylon Kingdom over the Southern Kingdom was an obvious example of the decline.

The fifth phase is fading away. This phase has not come yet over the three religions, for each religion still shows its existence. It is important to suggest that its smaller expressions might have happened among the three religions. In the Constitutive Process, there is an adoption and adaptation process. The role of the religious environment as a historical context for the three religions to come into being is important to be underlined for it helps explain how each religion connects. In addition to this, related to this section, the sacred geography within which the three religions were born was the shared location among the three. The idea of Sacred Geography I use in this regard is borrowed from Diana L. Eck's work entitled *India: Sacred Geography*, and Chris Park's book *Sacred Worlds: An Introduction to Geography and Religion*. These two argue that the "location or ground" on which religions come into being is not merely a place with coordinates, nor is a measured place with altitude. Instead, it contains the sacred in it.

The adoption and adaptation process shared by the three religions within such understanding are addressed. In 1833, Abraham Geiger became known to the public for his work *Was Hat Mohammed Aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?* Soon, his book became a controversial book. In his book, Geiger points out the presence of Judaic *Erzväter* in Islam. And this is an obvious

example of what Geiger said in the title of his book “aufgenommen”, a borrow. Additionally, the article “*Saudara dekat yang jauh, atau saudara jauh yang dekat: Memahami Jarak dan Space di dalam Teks-teks Suci Samawi*,” It has mentioned the work of David Sidersky’s work as an example of describing things shared between Judaism and Islam²³. In his work, Sidersky noticed the work of at-Tabari and Talmud Babylonia and found a quite similar formula describing the creation of Adam. His observation may be found below:

at-Tabari: que Dieu forma le corps d’Adam avec l’argile
Talmud B: le corps
d’Adam fut formé d’argile prise en Babylone

In addition to Sidersky’s work, the work of Abraham Isaac Katsh, *Judaism and the Koran: Biblical and Talmudic Backgrounds of the Koran and Its Commentaries*, is mentioned. Likewise, in the case of Islam and Christianity, the presence of Biblical figures has been addressed by Gabriel Said Reynolds in his book entitled *The Qur’an and its Biblical Subtext* and Roberto Tottoli’s book *Biblical Prophets in the Qur’an and Muslim Literature*. With this regard, it can be specific to mention an example of Islamic Christology, describing the refutation of Islam on the death of Jesus on the Cross, which is close to a group of Christians called Ebionites and a group of Gnostic. Related to the Ebionites’ voice in Islamic Christology has become part of the research done by Dominique Bernard in his book *Les disciples juifs de Jésus du 1er siècle a Mahomet: Recherches sur le mouvement ébionite*. All this information, again, is to describe the process lying behind the shared narrative of religion among the three religions, and it calls the process “adoption and adaptation” to replace the usage “borrow” as had been used by Abraham Geiger in the past. This replacement word is more constructive because it emphasizes familial ties between the three religions more than “borrow,” which does not contain such a familial notion. The process also describes each religion as an organism living in a transversal network between each other instead of being located in isolation. So, therefore, each other relies on one other and has constructed “a hybrid identity,” for each contains the other’s face in their face.

Comparative Theology refers to figures such as David Tracey, Keith Ward, Robert C. Neville, James Fredericks, Mark Heim, and Francis X. Clooney. All the figures are acknowledged scholars in the field of Comparative theology. However, Francis X. Clooney’s thoughts will be discussed in this paper.²⁴ Clooney attempts to define what comparative theology is. And his

²³ Abraham Silo Wilar. 2014. *Saudara Dekat yang Jauh, atau Saudara Jauh yang dekat ?* Binsar J. Pakpahan (Editor), *The Journey of All Rowing: Book 2 65 Years of Pdt. Einar M. Sitompul*. Jakarta: UPI STFT Jakarta.

²⁴ Francis X Clooney. 2010. *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders*. Oxford: Willey-Blackwell.

definition of it may be found in his book *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders*. His book presents his academic expertise in Hindu Studies and his intention to conduct an in-depth study about Hinduism to bring his study on Hinduism into his Catholic faith, in which he is a Catholic Jesuit. In his book *Comparative theology*, Clooney distinguishes between *Comparative Theology* and the *Theology of Religions*, from which he starts to define it. In defining it, Clooney begins with a statement on diversity as part of our life, which lives inside us. This fact of diversity seems to have been a source for a theology of religions to develop its content. And Clooney takes it as a departure point to develop his comparative theology within Hindu studies.

To Clooney's understanding, *Comparative in Comparative Theology* is to refer to a reflective and contemplative endeavor by the other, and *theology in Comparative Theology* means a mode of inquiry engaging a wide range of issues with full intellectual force, but ordinarily does so within the constraints of a commitment to a religious community, respect for its scriptures, traditions, and practices, and a willingness to affirm the truths and values of that tradition. In other words, it describes a way of faith-seeking understanding in which three words –faith, the search, and the intellectual goal—are so much related to one another that they are ready to be applied to academic exercise and remain in fruitful tension with one another. With this definition, Clooney approaches the phenomenon of God in Hinduism and Christianity. His academic endeavor, in my observation, is a substantial performance to present comparative theology as Clooney understands it. In addition, explaining why Clooney's performance is substantial in Hindu-Christianity relations is the phenomenon of God in Hinduism has been presented in the superiority complex of the religious framework, making God in Hinduism less superior than that Christianity God. This kind of superiority of one religion over another exists in many forms and can be seen in the following phenomena.

First, a popular belief states that one religion is more favorable on the side of God than others, so one religion is more accurate than another. Second is a belief in the superiority of one religion because other religions are less divine due to some lack. Surrounded by many forms of the superiority of religion over other religions, it is important to regard it with comparative theology. And that is what Clooney went through as he showed his journey in Hindu God and Christian God in his book *Hindu God, Christian God: How Reason Helps Break Down the Boundaries between Religions*.²⁵ In this book, Clooney attempts to show what comparative theology is regarding the phenomenon

²⁵ FrancisX Clooney.2001.*HinduGod,ChristianGod:HowReason Helps Break Down the Boundaries between Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

of God in Hindu and Christianity, which might be useful to respond to the superiority complex of religion.

Regarding the concern, Clooney states that both the existence and identity of God, seen in comparative theology, describe the Divine embodiment whose presence among humans is as varied as human beings. In his thought, God as the Mysterious Being can be talked about among humans within the Divine Embodiment. It is the only way humans can deal with God, for it is the bridge for humans to know God. Still, it simultaneously limits humans to one another in their understanding of God, allowing differences in thoughts of the existence and identity of God among humans. The concept of Divine Embodiment employed by Clooney may apply to the Abrahamic Religions for each of all, describing God as the Revealing God whose presence in the history of humans through “profane vessels” such as the prophets and “divine vessels” such as the Qur’an in Islam, Jesus Christ in Christianity, and the Tanakh in Judaism. All of this is the Divine Embodiment through which the adherents of each religion might experience the Deep Religion of each religion, allowing each religion to be different and interconnected to one another.

Inner Dimension of the Shared Narratives, Historical Trajectories, Comparative Theology and Its Practical Implications to Islamic Studies and Islamic Thought and Beyond

This part deals with the spiritual and practical dimensions of the proposed topic. So, it is more spiritual and practical compared to the first part. The two approaches I employ in the paper are not merely academic. It has a spiritual dimension. And this dimension is important to be addressed to make it visible and noticeable. It is within this understanding the spiritual dimension will be addressed. There are three concerns: Family Ties in the Shared Narrative of Religions, Historical-Comparative Consciousness leading to a State of Religious Literacy, and Humbleness.

Family Ties in the Shared Narrative of Religions Previous part explores the references describing the shared narrative of the Abrahamic Religions. That part contains a spiritual dimension that matters to me as the explorer of the references. In this regard, the spiritual dimension felt during the exploration was about family ties. But it is divided into two forms: first, family ties in the Abrahamic Religions, and second, family ties of God seekers of Religions. The family has a spiritual dimension.²⁶ And from Walsh’s understanding of it, family is a spiritual matter from the beginning through the end. This specific understanding of the family is important because it is the depth of

²⁶ Froma Walsh. 2012. “The Spiritual Dimension of Family Life.” In Walsh, Froma (Editor). *Normal Family Process* (4th ed.pp.347-372). New York: Guilford Press

reality of the shared narrative of the Abrahamic Religions. And this depth of reality is often forgotten as each family member lives their life. But the fact that family is spiritual, whose existence cannot be deleted even for once, will not separate each family member. It is a hard fact that the three Abrahamic religions are seen and lived as independently different family members. Each has built its own internal business and daily life practices. However, in my understanding, each religion is spiritually connected to the family of Abraham: they are not separated. Being independently different from a member family does not mean separation of one member of the family. And the quoted references describing the shared narrative of the Abrahamic religions are to convince the spiritual dimension of the narratives. Therefore, the interconnectedness of the three must be remembered to balance the independency of each member over the other. This practice of remembering is ethical conduct matching religious values within each religious community. Few scholars deal with these familial ties in the Abrahamic religions within several themes of discussion. And those scholars are F. E Peters, who wrote *The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, and Norman Solomon, Richard Harries, and Tim Winter, who edited a book entitled *Abraham's Children: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in conversations*.

Second, family ties of God Seekers of Religions. The second form of relations is more focused on broader and larger communities of religions. And this tie calls the Abrahamic religions for not being exclusive seekers of God, thinking that God only exists in their traditions, and promoting the syndrome of religious superiority over non-revealing religions. Regarding this, the spiritual aspect of a family of God seekers will protect the adherents of the Abrahamic religions not to degrade others from a different faith, for they are also God seekers whose journey takes different roads than that of the Abrahamic religions.

In Historical-Comparative Consciousness leading to a State of Religious Literacy and Humbleness, a consciousness was shaped by the approaches and called the generated consciousness as “Historical-Comparative Consciousness.” It is spiritually leading to two spiritual states. The first state is religious literacy, and the second is a state of Humility. The former state is inspired by the word religious literacy from Diana L. Eck of Harvard Divinity School. She is well known for her Pluralism project, which included becoming one of its characters. The latter state focuses more on a condition with no superiority syndrome while conducting the research. It happens because it is convinced from the depth that the Abrahamic religions are interconnected, and each is indebted to one other in its origin and development. And these two facts are hard to avoid, but those facts are to motivate me to be humble before other religions.

What are the Implications for Islamic Studies and Thought and Well Living? As said previously, these two fields are complex areas of research. So, in this regard, implications of the spiritual dimension of the shared narrative of religions and the approaches might add more complexity to the already-complex field, for it seems to suggest different engagement in the studies. Related to this different engagement, there are some papers relevant to the research on the “The Qur’an in its Milieu of Origin: Possibilities of the Historical reconstruction” conference held in Munster Universiteit, Germany. First, a paper presented by Heidar Eyvazi of URD Iran, whose paper is entitled Akkadian- Aramaic Texts to the Qur’an. Second, Sahiron Syamsuddin of UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta wrote a paper on The Story of Noah in the Bible and the Qur’an in search of its original meaning and contemporary significance. Through those papers, it can be concluded that the two scholars brought historical comparatives. There is a possibility to foster such research in Islamic studies and Islamic thoughts, so the fields might foster and promote some themes of research such as Intertextual hermeneutics in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Comparative history of the political body in making religion authoritative and dominating, Spiritual dimension of the shared narrative of the Abrahamic Religions, and so forth, and From nothing to authoritative: a historical trajectory of making the Abrahamic religions. All the themes are to recover the sibling relationship between the three religions of Abraham to strengthen the relationship.

CONCLUSION

Research conducted in the historical consciousness and spirituality of family ties of the Abrahamic religions might contribute to well-living. It is so because it provides the framework to understand each religious tradition within the state of religious literacy and Humbleness, which is a rudimentary element to cultivate interconnectedness to generate mental health in seeing and understanding each other and to resist the possibility of cultivating seeds of phobia against others. Here I connect the fields, the interconnectedness of the three religions, and the resistance against phobias (Judeophobia, Christianophobia, and Islamophobia) which seems to have been maintained in each community of the three religions. In the understanding resisting phobias is the very key to cultivating mental health, and to do so the fields might contribute with research or discussions addressing the family ties of the three religions, a spirituality of the shared narratives of the Abrahamic religions, religious literacy in the shared narratives of the Abrahamic religions, and so forth. As mental health has been connected to Islamic studies and Islamic thought through the shared narrative of the Abrahamic religions in which spirituality, family ties, religious literacy, and

Humbleness are the core content to be noticed, fostered, and promoted, the two will contribute to well living of the community that which allows social and economic well living to be pursued accordingly. It has described how the shared narrative of religions is connected to Islamic studies and thought, from which the well-living social, economic, and spiritual life may be pursued following the connections. Hopefully, it has stimulated a curiosity to start researching the relationship as discussed above.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, Shahab. 2017. *Before Orthodoxy: The Satanic Verses in Early Islam*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Clooney, Francis X. 2001. *Hindu God, Christian God: How Reason Helps Break Down the Boundaries between Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Clooney, Francis X. 2010. *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Desroche, Henri. 1958. Jean Danielou, *Théologie du Judeo-Christianisme*. *Archives des Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 170-171.
- Dumézil, Georges. 1974. *La Religion Romaine Archaique avec un appendice sur la religion des Etrusques*. Paris: Payot.
- Eck, Diana L. 2012. *India: Sacred Geography*. New York: Harmony Books.
- Geiger, Abraham. 1833. *Was Hat Mohammed Aus Dem Judenthume Aufgenommen?* Bonn.
- Katsh, Abraham Isaac. 1962. *Judaism and the Koran: Biblical and Talmudic backgrounds of the Koran and its commentaries*. New York: Perpetual Book.
- Luxenberg, Christoph. 2007. *The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran*. Germany: Verlag Hans Schiler.
- Masson, Denise. 1957. *Le Coran et la Révélation Judéo-Chrétienne : Etudes Comparées*. Paris: Libraire D'Amérique et D'Orient Adrien-Maissonneuve.
- Mingana, Alphonse. 1927. "Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kur'ān." *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Manchester: Universtiy Press, Longsmans, Green, & Co. London, England, Vol.11, No.1, 77-98.
- Park, Chris. 1994. *Sacred Worlds: An Introduction to Geography and Religion*. New York: Routledge.
- Peters, F.E. 2004. *The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Solomon, Norman, Harries, Richard, and Winter, Tim (Editors). 2006. *Abraham's Children: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Conversation*. New York: T & T Clark.

- Sidersky, David. 1933. *Les Origines des Legendes Musulmanes dans le Coran et dans les vies des prophetes*. Paris : Libraire Orientaliste Paul Geuthner.
- Thompson, Thomas L. 2005. *The Messiah Myth. The Near Eastern Roots of Jesus and David*. New York: Basic Books.
- Trimingham, Joseph Spencer. 1979. *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre Islamic Times*. Beirut: Longman Group Limited.
- Tottoli, Roberto. 2002. *Biblical Prophets in the Qur'an and Muslim Literature*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Walsh, Froma. 2012. "The Spiritual Dimension of Family Life." In Walsh, Froma (Editor). *Normal Family Process* (4th ed. pp.347-372). New York: Guilford Press
- Wilar, Abraham Silo. 2021. *Melek Agama Sebagai Pendekatan Untuk Membangun Budaya Damai Di Agama*. ICRP Webinar Materials. Not published.
- Wilar, Abraham Silo. 2021. *An Exercise of Doing Contextual- Constructive Theology with(in) Other Religions Utilizing Shared Narrative of Religions: A Sketch*. Material in Postgraduate Contextual Constructive Theology Class, STFT Jakarta. Unpublished.
- Wilar, Abraham Silo. 2014. *Saudara Dekat yang Jauh, atau Saudara Jauh yang dekat ?* Binsar J. Pakpahan (Editor), *The Journey of All Rowing: Book 2 65 Years of Pdt. Einar M. Sitompul*. Jakarta: UPI STFT Jakarta.