

Interpretation of Tuan Guru of Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI)-West Lombok on Religious Moderation Verses

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Abstract

This study discusses the issue of the interpretation of Tuan Guru of the Indonesian Ulema Council on the verses of religious moderation from the aspect of *aqidah* in the Qur'an. This is a qualitative study. The data were obtained through two sources, namely primary data from in-depth interviews with Tuan Guru, members of the Indonesian Ulema Council of West Lombok, and secondary data from documentation, namely data collection in the form of scientific books and scientific journals. The analytical approach used is content analysis. In this case, the researcher analyzed the results of the interviews and available literature to produce themes. This study finds that the verses that show moderation in the Qur'an from the perspective of *aqidah* can be categorized into four: first, faith and disbelief as personal matters; second, guidance belong only to Allah SWT; third, differences and diversity of beliefs as God's will (*irādah*); and fourth, that Prophet Muhammad as a messenger of Allah was sent as a bearer of good news. The informants emphasized their interpretation from the perspective of Islamic da'wah. This study promotes understanding moderate Islamic teachings, maintains inter-religious harmony, and builds a harmonious and tolerant society.

Keywords: *interpretation, Tuan Guru, West Lombok MUI, religious moderation.*

Abstrak

Kajian ini mendiskusikan satu isu yaitu interpretasi tuan guru Majelis Ulama' Indonesia terhadap ayat-ayat moderasi beragama dari aspek akidah dalam al-Qur'an. Kajian ini merupakan kajian kualitatif. Adapun data kajian ini diperoleh melalui dua sumber. Pertama, data primer dari teknik wawancara mendalam kepada tuan guru yang tergabung dalam komunitas Majelis Ulama Indonesia Lombok Barat. Kedua, data sekunder diperoleh melalui dokumentasi, yaitu pengumpulan data berupa buku-buku ilmiah dan jurnal-jurnal ilmiah. Adapun pendekatan analisis yang digunakan adalah analisis konten. Dalam hal ini, peneliti menganalisis hasil wawancara dan dokumen-dokumen yang tersedia, sehingga menghasilkan tema-tema. Kajian ini mebdapati bahwa ayat-ayat yang menunjukkan moderasi dalam al-Qur'an dari perspektif akidah dapat dikategorisasi menjadi empat: pertama, keimanan dan kekufuran sebagai urusan pribadi; kedua, petunjuk dan hidayah hanya milik Allah SWT; ketiga, perbedaan dan keragaman kepercayaan sebagai kehendak (*irādah*) Allah; dan keempat; Rasulullah diutus sebagai pembawa kabar gembira. Para informan lebih menekankan interpretasi mereka dalam perspektif dakwah Islamiyah. Kajian ini berkontribusi dalam mempromosikan pemahaman ajaran Islam moderat, menjaga kerukunan antar umat beragama, serta membangun masyarakat yang harmonis dan toleran.

Kata kunci: *interpretasi, Tuan Guru, MUI-Lombok Barat, moderasi beragama.*

INTRODUCTIONS

As a sacred text for Muslims, Qur'an has a dual role as a source of teachings and guidelines in worshiping Allah SWT and regulating human relations. The centrality of the teachings of the Qur'an underscores the importance of interaction that is full of mutual respect among the successors to the divine mission (*khalifatullah*) who live on this earth. Tolerance is considered one of the fundamental essences contained in the teachings of the Qur'an. The challenge humans face in understanding the Qur'an lies in differences in interpretation¹ or explaining this holy book from a sociological perspective, which creates various madhhab groups and religious organizations in society.²

Various madhhab, sects, and religious organizations have emerged due to different backgrounds in interpreting the texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah. For example, in the context of fiqh, the four well-known madhhabs are Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hambali. In Islamic theology, various madhhab emerged, such as the Kharijites, Murji'ah, Qadariyah, Jabriyyah, Mu'tazilah, and Ahl as-Sunnah.³ Meanwhile, many religious organizations such as Nahdhatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, Nahdhatul Wathan (NW), and others have also sprung up. It shows that every human being cannot avoid the reality of the plurality of interpretations, institutions, and religions.

Plurality reflects the existence of diversity and includes active involvement in dealing with this diversity. Over the past three decades, religion has become an essential source of moral imperatives for maintaining social cohesion. Religious commitment not only functions to mobilize public anger against the autocratic rulers of the state but also plays a constructive role in the process of nation-building and national reconciliation.⁴ Religious plurality exists at various levels, including regional, national, and in the context of international relations. This phenomenon is reflected in various aspects of life, such as family, community, workplace, school, and other locations. Every adherent of a religion is faced with the responsibility to not only acknowledge the existence and rights of other religions but also to try to understand the differences and similarities as the basis for harmony in the context of diversity.

The author sees that differences of opinion sometimes reach a very extreme level, namely horizontal conflicts involving religious communities in mutually slaughtering, looting, and burning

¹ Abdul Mustaqim, *Epistemologi Tafsir Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: LKis, n.d.).

² Mannā' Khalīl al-Qattān, *Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Qur'an*, ed. Mudzakkir (Bogor, 2011).

³ Harun Nasution, *Teologi Islam: Aliran-Aliran Sejarah Analisa Perbandingan* (Jakarta: UI Press, 1986).

⁴ Abdulaziz Sachedina, *Kesetaraan Kaum Beriman, Akar Pluralisme Demokratis Dalam Islam [The Islamic Roots of Democratic, Pluralism]*, ed. Satrio Wahono (Jakarta: PT. Serambi Ilmu Semesta, 2002).

everything that exists, even places of worship. All of this is done with the excuse of maintaining the identity of each religious group. Even more worrying is that the sacred teachings believed by every religious community, which should be valued as capable of providing welfare and peace for humanity, have been misinterpreted and even used as a justification for the extreme attitude and behavior of religious people.

The Qur'an acknowledges the existence of plurality in human life and emphasizes the importance of moderation; the plurality of *aqidah* is recognized within the framework of a single religious unity. The Qur'an implies that differences in faith (*aqidah*) can be accommodated by attaining salvation through several principles, namely: 1) Belief in God Almighty; 2) Belief in the hereafter, including belief in resurrection, accountability for good and bad deeds, and the existence of retribution for these actions; and 3) Do good deeds in the life of the world.⁵

This study is oriented by one problem formulation: How does Tuan Guru of West Lombok MUI interpret verses related to religious moderation? This study is important. The author sees that Tuan Guru has an important role as a teacher and spiritual leader for Muslims. By providing the correct interpretation of the verses of religious moderation, Tuan Guru can strengthen religious teachings and directions by Islam's true teachings. Also, Tuan Guru Lombok has a deeper understanding of Lombok's cultural and local context, including the local people's traditions, customs, and views. By understanding this context, Tuan Guru can provide an interpretation of religious moderation verses relevant to the social reality in that area. Therefore, Tuan Guru Lombok's interpretation of verses of religious moderation contributes to promoting an understanding of moderate Islamic teachings, maintaining harmony between religious communities, and building a harmonious and tolerant society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher used the *mawḍū'i* interpretation method approach. The *mawḍū'i* interpretation or thematic interpretation is a method of interpretation that seeks and finds answers to the Qur'an about a certain problem by collecting (documenting) all the verses with that problem, then explaining it through certain sciences relevant to the topic in question discussed, which in the end can display the complete concept of the Qur'an on the matter.⁶ In this case, the author first documents all verses related to plurality in various aspects as a method of collecting (extracting) initial data, after which the author conducts in-depth interviews with West Lombok MUI members

⁵ Muhammad Imarah, *Islam Dan Pluralitas: Perbedaan Dan Kemajemukan Dalam Bingkai Persatuan*, ed. Abdul Hayyi Al-Kattani (Jakarta: Gema Inasni Press, 1999).

⁶ Abd Hay Al-Farmawiy, *Al-Bidāyah Fī Tafsīr Mauḍū'i* (Kairo: al-Hadārah al- 'Arabiyah, 1997).

to obtain interpretation results from these verses. The analysis was carried out through several procedures:⁷ data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Qur'an and Religious Moderation

The Qur'an acknowledges that various societal components, including religion, have different ways of life. Islam teaches the importance of harmony and tolerance and denounces violence and discrimination. God created the earth not for one particular group or religious community but for all humanity. Bestowing various religions does not mean that God justifies the discrimination of one person over another, but rather that each one competes in doing good deeds.

Humans are equal before Allah SWT; what is judged is faith which is the basis of goodness and sincerity in doing good deeds. The Qur'an has stated that "Everyone turns to their direction 'of prayer'. Race with one another in doing good deeds. Wherever you are, Allah will bring you all together for judgment. Surely, Allah is Able of everything." (QS al-Baqarah/ 2: 148). As the bearer of divine treatise

As the bearer of the divine treatise (*hāmīl al-risālah*), Prophet Muhammad launched this spirit in Medina. In this city, for example, the Medina Charter (*Mīthāq al-Madīnah*) was born, which guarantees freedom of religion and protection for all citizens, whether Muslim, Jewish, or the polytheists of Medina. Even since the beginning of his prophethood, a religiously plural society has been formed because chronologically, Islam came precisely after the presence of religions such as Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Ancient Egyptian.⁸

Apart from firmly opposing all forms of polytheism, Islam also obligates Muslims to protect the feelings of polytheists. Respect for other people's religions and beliefs is not only important for a diverse society but is also an integral part of the teachings of Islam itself.⁹ In this context, even though the difference between Muslims and polytheists is very clear, the Qur'an does not encourage or allow Muslims to deride or ridicule the idols of polytheists. More precisely, the Prophet showed a proportional attitude toward them.

History recorded that prior to his departure to Medina, the Prophet SAW have received threats. In Islamic history, he migrated from Mecca to Medina and then returned to Mecca, known

⁷ Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2014).

⁸ Komaruddin Hidayat, "Agama-Agama Besar Dunia: Misalnya Perkembangan Dan Interrelasi," in *Passing Over: Melintas Batas Agama*, ed. Komaruddin Hidayat and Ahmad Gaus (Jakarta: Gramedia Paramadina, 1998).

⁹ Djohan Effendi, "Kemusliman Dan Kemajemukan," in *Dialog: Kritik Dan Identitas Agama*, ed. TH Sumartana (Yogyakarta: Dian-Interfidei, 1994).

as *fath* Makkah. Mecca eventually fell under the political power of the Muslims. In this victorious event, the Prophet SAW did not take revenge against anyone who had previously expelled him from his birthplace, Mecca. The Prophet SAW said *antum al-tulaqa'* (you are free, independent).¹⁰

This fact should have left a strong impression on Muslims. The Prophet SAW has been a role model regarding the ethics of respect and tolerance, both in practice and concept. He did not force others to accept Islam and, with a strong faith, acknowledged the existence of other religions that were developing in the Arab region at that time and respected the rights of their adherents.

Moderation comes from the Latin *moderatio*, which means “moderate” or, in other words, not excessive and not lacking.¹¹ In English, moderation means “to lessen the intensity or extremeness of”.¹² Therefore, in simple terms, moderation can be interpreted as an attitude rejecting something excessive or extreme.

In Arabic, moderation is known as the word *wasat* or *wasatīyah*, which is synonymous to the terms *tawassut* (in the middle), *i'tidāl* (righteous), and *tawāzun* (balanced). *Wasat* and its equivalent imply the same meaning: fairness, which means choosing a middle way between extremes.¹³ The opposite of moderation is excessive, or in Arabic, it is known as the term *taṭarruf*, which in Arabic means *extreme*, *radical*, and *excessive* in English. The word extreme can also mean “doing too much, going from end to end, turning around, taking the opposite action/path.”

What is meant by “moderation” is an attitude or activity carried out proportionally, not excessively or lacking.¹⁴ From a more macro perspective, moderation can be understood as an attitude that seeks benefit in all things, not only for certain groups but all of humanity, through realizing shared justice as *al-maslahah al-āmmah*.¹⁵

On the other hand, some understand that moderation is a form of approach to religion. Religious moderation must be understood as an approach to one’s beliefs that achieves a healthy balance between adherence to one’s religion (exclusive) and respect for the religious practices of others who have different views (inclusive). This balance or middle ground in religious practice will

¹⁰ Muhammad Husain Haikal, *Hayāt Muhammad* (Kairo: Dar al-Ma’arif, n.d.).

¹¹ Pipit Aidul Fitriyana et al., “Dinamika Moderasi Beragama Di Indonesia,” 2020; Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

¹² “Moderate Definition and Meaning - Merriam Webster,” August 9, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/moderate>.

¹³ Tim Penyusun Kemenag RI, ed., *Moderasi beragama*, 1st ed. (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat, Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

¹⁴ Mohammad Salik, “Nahdlatul Ulama Dan Gagasan Moderasi Islam,” 2020.

¹⁵ Salik.

undoubtedly protect us from becoming too extremist, intolerant, or revolutionary in our approach to religion.¹⁶

In the context of Islam in some literature, *wasatiyyat Islam* is often translated as ‘*justly balanced Islam*,’ ‘*the middle path Islam*’ or ‘*the middle way Islam*,’ and Islam as *mediating and balancing power* to play a mediating and counterweight role. These terms show the importance of justice, balance, and a middle way in Islam, not to get stuck in extremity. Therefore, so far, the concept of Wasatiyyat Islam has been understood by reflecting on the principles *tawasut*, *tasamuh*, *tawazun*, *i’tidal*, and *iqtisad*. Thus, these principles characterize *Wasatiyyat al-Islam*, also known as *Ummatan Wasatan*.¹⁷ In the context of the Quran, moderation is referred to in Surah al-Baqarah verse 143 with the term *wasat* or *wasatiyyah*, which means middle (*i’tidal*). In some Al-Qur’an commentaries, the term *wasat* is interpreted *dūna maylin yumnan walā yusran* (not inclined to either the right or the left). From this basic meaning, moderation is understood by the world’s great scholar, Yusuf al-Qarḍāwī, as *mā bayna al-tashaddud wa al-tasābul* (understanding and middle attitude between radical and liberal) in religion.¹⁸ Therefore, Islam and the value of moderation have a very close and inseparable relationship.

The Interpretation of Tuan Guru of Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI)-West Lombok Moderation of Faith and Disbelief as a Personal Matter

Among the verses of the Qur’an that discuss religious moderation in the context of faith and disbelief as a personal matter are Surah al-Isra’ verse 15 and Surah al-Kahf verse 29. Concerning religious moderation, the two verses emphasize that human deeds will return to each individual according to what he has done; second, guidance (*al-hidayah*) is God’s prerogative. Tuan Guru Haji (TGH) Lalu Pattimura Farhan, a member of the West Lombok MUI Fatwa Commission, emphasized the following:

“The guidance (*al-Hidayah*) referred to in the Qur’an, Surah al-Isra’ Verse 15: “Whoever chooses to be guided, it is only for their own good. And whoever chooses to stray, it is only to their own loss.” The guidance that Allah instills into the human heart is His prerogative. However, even though guidance is God’s prerogative, it does not stop every Muslim from preaching Islam to others. Likewise with Surah al-Kahf, verse 29, faith and disbelief are personal choices. No one can force other people into religion.¹⁹

¹⁶ RI, *Moderasi Beragama*.

¹⁷ Fitriyana et al., “Dinamika Moderasi Beragama Di Indonesia.”

¹⁸ Arief Subhan and Abdallah, *Konstruksi Moderasi Beragama: Catatan Guru Besar UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta* (Jakarta: PPIM UIN Jakarta, 2021).

¹⁹ Lalu Pattimura Farhan, Interview with Lalu Pattimura Farhan, 2022.

TGH Pattimura Farhan added and emphasized that faith and disbelief are matters of privacy. He said “*fa linafsihī*” shows that faith and disbelief are private matters of every human being. Therefore, coercion in religion is not permissible. TGH Pattimura emphasized as follows:

“So, I emphasize that Surah al-Isra’ verse 15 underlies moderation. The word “*fa linafsihī*” shows a disclaimer, the elimination of coercion in all matters, including religion. In addition, the verse wants to motivate each individual not to be excessive in preaching and careless in imposing their will because everyone has their rights and choices, and every choice has consequences.”²⁰

TGH Lalu Fahmi Husain also emphasized that everyone will be held accountable for their deeds in the world. TGH Fahmi emphasized that the substance of surah al-Isra’ verse 15 and surah al-Kahf verse 29 is freedom for everyone to choose faith or disbelief. Faith or disbelief is a private space that has individual consequences. Of course, every choice has consequences that must be considered.²¹ TGH Lalu Fahmi Husen stated the following:

“...Concerning religious moderation, Q.s. al-Isra’ verse 15 gives human freedom to choose the path of faith or disbelief. Of course, this is after Allah SWT has explained what faith is and what disbelief is. So, faith or disbelief is a private space that must be individually accounted for before Allah SWT.”²²

TGH Lalu Fahmi added that even though faith and disbelief are part of the private sphere, God has commanded the Prophet Muhammad to tell the public to choose two paths, namely faith, and disbelief. But previously, Allah stated that the truth comes from Allah.²³ So, the preaching orders still apply but without coercion in religion, as the Prophet was sent only as a preacher. Prophet Muhammad only served as a person who convey the truth, not someone who give guidance.

The author sees that informants interpret Surah al-Isra’ verse 15 and al-Kahf verse 29 as a form of moderation in religion. Faith is a person’s belief in a religion or God. Faith is very personal and often seen as part of a person’s right to privacy. On the other hand, the author also sees that *kufr* refers to rejection or disbelief in certain religious beliefs or teachings. Like faith, disbelief is also part of a person’s right to privacy. Therefore, no one can threaten or force someone to believe or change their beliefs.

According to Al-Razi,²⁴ Surah al-Isra’ verse 15 speaks in the context of good deeds (*al-kebair*) and bad (*al-sharr*). Al-Razi added and emphasized that forcing others to do good or do bad is an act

²⁰ Farhan.

²¹ Farhan.

²² Lalu Fahmi Husen, Interview with Lalu Fahmi Husen, 2022.

²³ Husen.

²⁴ Abū Abdillāh Muḥammad bin Umar bin al-Ḥasan bin al-Ḥusayn Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr Al-Rāzī al-Mushtabīr Bi al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr Wa Mafātīḥ al-Gaib* (Beirut: Dar Ihya’ al-Turath al-‘Arabi, 1420); Abu Al-Fida

that is inappropriate for anyone. Al-Razi²⁵ seems to agree with the opinion of the *al-Mu'tazilab* that faith, disbelief, obedience, and disobedience are left to the servant and his choice. Al-Razi stated the following:

"وَلَقَدْ سَأَلَنِي بَعْضُهُمْ عَنِ هَذِهِ الْآيَةِ فَقُلْتُ: هَذِهِ الْآيَةُ مِنْ أَقْوَى الدَّلَائِلِ عَلَى صِحَّةِ قَوْلِنَا وَذَلِكَ لِأَنَّ الْآيَةَ صَرِيحَةٌ فِي أَنَّ حُصُولَ الْإِيمَانِ وَحُصُولَ الْكُفْرِ مَوْقُوفٌ عَلَى حُصُولِ مَشِيئَةِ الْإِيمَانِ وَحُصُولِ مَشِيئَةِ الْكُفْرِ."

"Some of them (some Mu'tazilites) asked me about this verse, and I replied: This verse is one of the strongest proofs of the legitimacy of our opinion. It is because surah al-Kahf Verse 29 is a clear verse that the attainment of faith and attainment of disbelief depends on the attainment of the will of faith and the attainment of the will of disbelief."

According to Al-Zamakhshari,²⁶ Allah uses the diction of the words "command" and "choice" in Surah al-Kahf Verse 29 because when a person is enabled to choose which one he wants, it is as if he has the choice to be governed and to decide whatever he wants from faith and disbelief. Allah bestows reason on humans so they can choose the path of faith or disbelief. Therefore, faith and disbelief are personal matters determined by reason and mind bestowed by God.

According to Muhammad Qurays,²⁷ Surah al-Kahf Verse 29 instructs the Prophet to emphasize that truth comes from God. So, whoever among humans wants to believe in what the Messenger of Allah conveyed, let him believe. Profits and benefits will return to him. However, whoever among humans chooses disbelief and rejects Allah's messages, then let him disbelieve - even though he has wealth and high social status. Rasulullah and Allah will not lose in the slightest due to human disbelief.

The author sees that the interpretations of the commentators and the opinions of West Lombok MUI members show that faith and disbelief are the privacy of every human being. Humans are given the right to choose between faith and disbelief. Humans have been endowed with reason to choose between faith or disbelief; every human being must be responsible for their own choices. However, every Muslim still has an obligation to invoke and promote faith in Allah. If a Muslim has called people to faith, every human being is given the right to privacy to choose faith or disbelief.

Ismail bin 'Umar bin Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, ed. Muhammad Husain Shams Al-Din (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1419).

²⁵ Al-Rāzī, *Tafsir Al-Rāzī al-Mushtabir Bi al-Tafsir al-Kabir Wa Mafatih al-Gaib*.

²⁶ Abu al-Qasim Mahmud bin 'Amr bin Ahmad Al-Zamakhshari, *Al-Kashshaf 'an Haqa'iq Ghavamid al-Tanzil* (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, 1407).

²⁷ M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2005).

Guidance is Allah's Prerogative

Among the verses of the Qur'an that discuss guidance as God's will are al-Zumar verses 36-37 and al-Baqarah verse 142. According to Ustadz Prosmala Hadisaputra, a member of the West Lombok MUI, Surah al-Zumar verses 36 and 37 teach the principles of religious moderation, namely not forcing other people to convert to Islam or to change their beliefs because faith and guidance are God's prerogative. Ustadz Prosmala Hadisaputra explained in the following interview fragment:

“I understand Q.s. al-Zumar: 36-37 in the context of the belief that: First, guidance is purely the prerogative of God; Second, only God can determine one's faith to embrace Islam; Third, Allah confirms that Allah is the Almighty, who can give guidance. I think this is part of the verse of the Koran about the importance of realizing that we can only convey the truth, but only Allah has the right, has the power to provide guidance. Even in the story of Abu Talib, who was still a disbeliever until the end of his life, the Prophet continued to urge his uncle to convert to Islam, but his uncle still did not accept the shahada. God also rebuked him: “إنك لا تهدي من أحببت ولكن الله يهدي من يشاء وهو أعلم بالمهتدين”. Therefore, our obligation is only to convey the truth with love, compassion, without intimidation, coercion, as the Messenger of Allah exemplified.²⁸

Furthermore, Ustadz Prosmala continued his argument by quoting the final fragment of Surah al-Baqarah verse 142. Ustadz Prosmala stated as follows:

“As I said, instructions and guidance are based on Allah's will. If Allah wills, then Allah gives His guidance. If not, Allah will not give him a clue. Therefore, there is no compulsion to obtain guidance in faith and Islam. Moreover, Allah strengthens with the final part of Q.s. al-Baqarah (2): 142, “يهدي من يشاء إلى صراط مستقيم”. “So, it is even stronger than guidance, and it belongs to Allah. Humans only carry out their duties as fellow servants who have an obligation to advise each other.”²⁹

Guidance (*al-hidayah*) comes only from Allah. However, although Allah is considered the source of guidance according to the beliefs of the Mu'tazilah sect, humans are endowed with free will that enables them to accept or reject such guidance. God gave humans reason and free will, enabling them to choose to follow or ignore His instructions.³⁰ In this context, human decisions impact the world's life and the hereafter of individuals. Thus, even though guidance is considered to come from Allah, acceptance of it remains each individual's responsibility and personal decision.

Because guidance comes from Allah, the prophets are only ordered to convey His teachings. A prophet has no power to give *hidayah* (guide) *tanfiq* (guidance), and *thawab* (merit). The Prophet only served as a preacher who conveyed God's teachings.³¹ It shows that *da'wah* must be carried

²⁸ Prosmala Hadisaputra, Interview with Prosmala Hadisaputra, 2022.

²⁹ Hadisaputra.

³⁰ Bustami Saladin, “Hidayah Dalam Al-Qur'an,” *Nuansa* 10, no. 2 (2013): 439–47.

³¹ Abu 'Abd Allah Muḥammad bin Aḥmad al-Anṣārī Al-Qurtubī, *Al-Jamī' Li Abkām al-Qur'an* (Kairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah, 1964).

out with moderate strategies, methods, and approaches. Faith and Islam are only obligatory to convey, while guidance to faith in Islam is the will of Allah.

Allah is the God who gives guidance, but not everyone is guided by Him.³² According to Al-Sa'adi³³, guidance and misguidance are in the hands of Allah. Whatever He wills will happen, and whatever He doesn't will won't happen. The creation of those who are guided and those who are not is in Allah's hands. He is the one who has the power to give guidance. If He wills, there is no one able to defy against His blessing and will.³⁴

The author believes that guidance is Allah's prerogative, and Muslims are responsible for being moderate in their religion. It has implications for freedom of religion (*al-hurriyyah al-diniyyah*). Freedom of religion is a fundamental right given by Allah to every human.³⁵ Allah gives freedom to every individual in choosing their religion. There is no compulsion in this matter.

On the other hand, Allah gives instructions to humans to seek the truth with an open heart and a clear mind. All human beings have the same right to seek and practice religion according to their beliefs sincerely without pressure or coercion. This freedom of religion reflects God's infinite mercy and compassion for His creation.

Diversity of Beliefs as Will (Irādah) of Allah

Among the verses of the Koran that discuss differences in belief as God's will are surah al-Baqarah verse 62, and al-Baqarah verses 137-138. Differences among people are considered universal laws (*sunnah kauniyyah*). This difference is a fact that has long been explained by Allah in the Qur'an,³⁶ including differences in religion and beliefs. Therefore, the author can say that different beliefs have existed since the earth was created for human habitation.

TGH. Subki Sasaki, a member of the West Lombok MUI, is straightforward in interpreting Surah al-Baqarah verse 62. He interprets from a historical perspective that diversity in religion is a historical journey that cannot be denied. There are at least four important points of TGH interpretation. First, *Mu'min* or *Muslim* is the original ideology of humankind. All the prophets and apostles carried this ideology from Prophet Adam to Prophet Noah and Prophet Abraham, called

³² Muhammad bin Saleh Al-'Uthaymin, *Tafsir Al-Quran al-Karim: Surat al-Nur* (Saudi Arabia: Mu'assah al-Shaykh Muhammad bin Saleh al-'Uthaymin al-Khayriyyah, 1436).

³³ Abdul Rahman bin Nasir bin Abdillah Al-Sa'adi, *Taysir Al-Karim al-Rahman Fi Tafsir Kalam al-Manan* (Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 2000).

³⁴ Wahbah Al-Zuhaily, *Al-Tafsir al-Munir Fi al-'Aqidah Wa al-Shari'ah Wa al-Manhaj* (Damaskus: Dar al-Fikr, 1991).

³⁵ Mohammad Fuad Al Amin Mohammad Rosyid, "Konsep Toleransi Dalam Islam Dan Implementasinya Di Masyarakat Indonesia," *Jurnal Madaniyah* 9, no. 2 (2019): 277–96.

³⁶ Sahirah Huzain Kazhim, "Al-Risalah al-Muhammadiyah Wa 'Alamitat al-Islam," in *Al-Mu'tamar al-Fikri Wa al-Tsaqafi al-Duvali al-Awwal Li Jami'ah Wasith*, 2021, 441–48.

Ibrahimi Religion. Second, the Jewish group is a very militant splinter group in its history, both in the West and in the East or the Middle East; Third, Christianity is the religion that has the most followers, both Orthodox, Catholics, and Christian groups who followed Martien Luther to become Protestants; Fourth, Sabian is a group that recognizes angels as the embodiment of God.³⁷

The author sees the interpretation of TGH. Subki Sasaki is very interesting. The author agrees with his interpretation of surah al-Baqarah, verse 62, that historically Islam cannot be separated from its predecessors, such as Judaism, Christianity, and people who believe in angels as God (Sabians). A pluralist society has been found in the Prophet's time. The Prophet arranged the city of Medina in a pluralist situation. The city of Medina is not only inhabited by Muslims but also by Jews, Christians, Sabians, and the Majus. Therefore, diversity and pluralism contain divine wisdom (*hikmah rabbanīyyah*); the exchange of culture and knowledge between different nations and societies.³⁸

The author sees that sura al-Baqarah, verse 62, can be a spirit of religious moderation amid a pluralist society. According to Sayyid Husein Fadhlullah³⁹, the meaning of Surah al-Baqarah, Verse 62 is very clear. The verse emphasizes that all religious groups with different thoughts, religions, and beliefs will achieve salvation in the afterlife, but with one condition, namely upholding the principles of faith in Allah, belief in the Last Day, and doing good deeds. Rashīd⁴⁰ in a social context (*mu'amalah*), confirms that the reward from Allah does not depend on the conditions of belief in Prophet Muhammad because this verse relates to how Allah SWT treats every religious group or individual who believes in the Prophet and receives His revelations.

The Qur'an explicitly teaches Muslims to be fair to all individuals. Rasulullah SAW also gave a real example of building *ukhuwwah insāniyyah* (human brotherhood) with other people in Medina.⁴¹ Lutfi⁴² confirms that there are many similarities between the situation of religious diversity in Medina and Indonesia. This similarity justifies the importance of building religious moderation that promotes tolerance, as exemplified by the Prophet when he built the city of Medina.

³⁷ Subki Sasaki, Interview with Subki Sasaki, 2022.

³⁸ Kazhim, "Al-Risalah al-Muhammadiyah Wa 'Alamitat al-Islam."

³⁹ Sayyid Husein Fadhlullah, *Tafsir Min Wahy Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Malak, 1998).

⁴⁰ Muhammad Rashid Riḍa, *Tafsir Al-Manar* (Kaisro: Hay'ah al-Miṣriyyah al-'AmmahLi al-Kitab, 1990).

⁴¹ Muhammad Faiq Muhammad Khudhori and Ibnu Farhan, "Reinterpreting Religious Pluralisme in QS. al-Baqarah:62," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 29, no. 2 (2021): 101–17, <https://doi.org/10.24014/Jush.v29i1.10662>.

⁴² Muhamad Lutfi et al., "Model Toleransi Prophetik Di Madinah Pasca Hijrah Dan Relevansinya Terhadap Pluralitas Sosial Budaya Indonesia," *Jurnal Alwatzikhoebillah: Kajian Islam, Pendidikan, Ekonomi, Humaniora* 7, no. 1 (2021): 25–35, <https://doi.org/10.37567/alwatzikhoebillah.v7i1.410>.

Furthermore, Lutfi⁴³ states that there are three main reasons why the model of tolerance applied in Medina should be adopted in Indonesia. First, there are similarities in social and cultural reality between contemporary Indonesia and Medina at the time of the Prophet. Second, tolerance is an integral part of Islamic teachings taught by Prophet Muhammad, and considering that the majority of Indonesia's population is Muslim, this becomes even more relevant. Third, adopting the principle of inter-religious tolerance will be an effective strategy in convincing other religions and countries that Islam is not a religion that adheres to violence and that Indonesia is a country that rejects terrorism. Therefore, adjustment and communication with other people with different religions, beliefs, sects, or thoughts can be made through a constructive dialogue conducted in good faith, respecting other people's opinions, and knowing the rights of each individual.

Furthermore, the author sees that the informant emphasizes his interpretation that the state is obliged to promote the values of religious moderation so that there is no coercion in religion and in carrying out worship. Also, the state must be present to create a sense of security for all people, regardless of religion and belief. Therefore, the state is the primary control tool in creating religious moderation because it has power and authority, so it is considered more effective in promoting religious moderation. TGH. Subki Sasaki firmly stated his interpretation of Q.s. al-Baqarah (2): 137-138 as follows:

“...the verse (Q.s. al-Baqarah (2): 137-138) is about the context of Daulah Islamiyah, where power is in the hands of the caliph, but this verse does not mean that the caliphate or the state may impose coercion in matters of belief. Another verse abrogated (*mansukh*): "لا إكراه في الدين..."⁴⁴

Furthermore, TGH. Subki explained that in religious moderation, the state provides a sense of security, comfort, prosperity, and equality in law. The state should not interfere in faith and worship because that is a private domain. The issue of worship and belief is the business of each individual. The state must realize welfare and attend to public matters. If society's understanding is like this, many social problems can be resolved because people understand religious moderation well.⁴⁵ As the holder of the “*khilafah*” the government must remain on the basic principle of the caliphate, namely acting as a substitute for God on earth who contributes to the universe. Man is God's caliph on earth. As long as man is the caliph of God, he must imitate the caliph's qualities characterized by the love of peace, compassion, cooperation, and brotherhood. A caliph also respects the rights of others to have opinions, beliefs, and thoughts.⁴⁶

⁴³ Muhamad Lutfi et al.

⁴⁴ Sasaki, Interview with Subki Sasaki.

⁴⁵ Sasaki.

⁴⁶ Kazhim, “Al-Risalah al-Muhammadiyah Wa 'Alamitat al-Islam.”

The Messenger of Allah as A Bearer of Good News

One of the concepts of the Qur'an that shows moderation in religion is the concept of the apostleship of the Prophet Muhammad, who was sent as a bearer of good news. It can be seen in Al-Baqarah verse 119 and verse 120. TGH. Nawawi Hakim, a member of the West Lombok MUI, understands surah al-Baqarah verse 119 as a verse of balance or moderation. As a bearer of good news, Prophet Muhammad must also be viewed as a warner. TGH. Nawawi states as follows:

“Basically, the prophets and messengers of Allah as bearers of good news and warners. It can be seen in many Qur'ans, including al-Baqarah, Verse 213. Allah also mentions specifically that the Messenger of Allah is *nadhīr* (warning bearer) and *bashīr* (good news bearer) in surah Hud verse 2.⁴⁷

Furthermore, TGH. Nawawi Hakim stated that the Prophet's role as a bearer of good news (*bashīr*) cannot be separated from its role as a warner (*nadhīr*). The Messenger of Allah is a warner for actions that should not be done. He is also the herald of glad tidings for the deed that ought to be done. On this basis, everyone is obliged to believe in the Messenger of Allah, believe in the Qur'an that he brought, and all that he preached.⁴⁸

In a social and preaching context, the spirit of religious moderation is indispensable. The attitude of *bashīran* and *nadhīran* is part of an attitude of moderation, which is interpreted as a balance (*tawāzūn*). Moderate attitudes such as *tawāzūn* seek to combine material and spiritual or combine the world and the hereafter. It aligns with the composition of humans with a body and soul.⁴⁹ Therefore, the *bashīran* attitude cannot be separated from the *nadhīran* attitude. These two attitudes must always go hand in hand so that the activities of Islamic da'wah (al-Dakwah al-Islamiyah) and Islamic education (*al-Tarbiyah al-Islamiyyah*) become moderate.

The author also emphasizes that the mention of the word *bashīran* (good news bearer) before the word *nadhīran* (warning bearer) is an indication that needs to be observed in the context of religious moderation. According to Ar-Razi,⁵⁰ *bashīran* is prioritized over *nadhīran*, because *bashīran* attitude aims to maintain health, while *nadhīran* is to eliminate illness. The author sees that *bashīran*'s attitude aims to protect the souls and hearts of the people so that they embrace Islam happily. The *nadhīran* attitude is only presented when people's faith is low so they must be given a warning as shock therapy to restore their mental health.

⁴⁷ Nawawi Hakim, Interview with Nawawi Hakim, n.d.

⁴⁸ Hakim.

⁴⁹ Khadijah Musta'id, "Al-Wastiyyah Wa al-I'tidal: Al-Thariq Li Fahmi Ma'ni al-Islam," al-Jazeera, 2017, 3, <https://www.aljazeera.net/blogs/2017/9/24/الوسطيةوالاعتدال-الطريق-لفهم-معاني>.

⁵⁰ Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr Al-Rāzī al-Mushtahir Bi al-Tafsīr al-Kabir Wa Mafātīh al-Gaib*.

On the other hand, Tantawi⁵¹ and Al-Ri'asah⁵² stated that prioritizing the *bashīran* attitude aims to respect the believers who are given the good news. The *bashīran* and *nadhīran* redaction is a strong indication that the main purpose of the Messenger of Allah was sent as blessing to the universe. According to Al-Ibrahimi⁵³, *bashīran* attitude is prioritized over *nadhīran* because the desired result, goal, and what is desired is joy. In line with that, Al-Khidr Husayn⁵⁴ stated that the reason for the role *bashīran* was mentioned before the role *nadhīran* because *bashīran* was more in line with Prophet Muhammad's *da'wah* method. He came up with reassuring arguments that people do not need a *nadhīran* attitude but a *bashīran* attitude to increase their peace of mind.

On the other hand, TGH. Abdullah Musthofa interprets the two verses by first referring to the cause of the revelation of the Qur'an (*asbāb al-nuzūl*). TGH. Abdullah stated as follows:

“It is necessary to pay attention to the *asbabun nuzul* from the verse, where the Jewish infidels at that time offered the Prophet to accommodate each other in worship. However, Allah ordered him to reject the offer. If we take this verse in the present context, the verse “ولن ترضى عنك اليهود ولا النصارى حتى تتبع ملتهم” shows that Jews and Christians are the same as us, regardless of whether they have changed and revised their holy books, namely these three religions (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism) are *tablīg* religions. It means that each of these religions must be preached. The character of religion is the same. Christians also want to increase their adherents. Jews also want to increase their followers, likewise with Islam. So, if it is related to the current time, there is a potential for clashes between one religion and another. Once again, there is potential for a clash between religions. It is because the character of these religions is *tablīg* religions. They (Jews and Christians) also have a mission to multiply their people.”⁵⁵

TGH. Abdullah seemed to emphasize that every religion has the character of *tablīg*. Every religion must convey its teachings to increase the number of adherents. TGH. Abdullah stated as follows:

“So, these Jews and Christians feel marginalized and grow to hate themselves. Of course, past and present contexts are different, as well as history, which is different from today. For example, in the context of *da'wah*, don't just instill hatred but prioritize *mahabbah*. Try that strategy that we use in preaching. So, we shouldn't preach by releasing “hate bombs.” It is no longer relevant. We should prioritize *mahabbah* strategy. So that through this strategy, they will know that Islam is a religion full of compassion and love. Therefore, if we instill hatred towards Jews

⁵¹ Muhmamad Sayyid Tantawi, *Al-Tafsir al-Wasit Li al-Qur'an al-Karim* (Kairo: Dar Nahdah Misr, 1998).

⁵² al-Ri'asah, *Majalat Al-Buhuth al-Islamiyyah*, n.d.

⁵³ Muhammad bin Bashir bin Umar Al-Ibrahimi, *Athar Al-Imam Mubammad al-Bashir al-Ibrahimi* (Dar al-Garbi al-Islami, 1997).

⁵⁴ al-Imam Muhamad al-Khidr Husayn, *Mawsuat al'Amal al-Kamilah Li al-Imam Mubammad al-Khidr Husayn* (Siria: Dar al-Nawadir, 2010).

⁵⁵ Abdullah Musthofa, Interview with Abdullah Musthofa, 2022.

and Christians, the consequences will return to the Muslims. Non-Muslims may not have sympathy anymore, so they are not interested in embracing Islam.”⁵⁶

Based on this interpretation, in the context of religious moderation, it is better if the ulema’ as the inheritor of the prophetic teachings, continue to perform *tablig*, but in ways that show love (*mahabbah*). A preacher must convey soothing material in ways that evoke sympathy and empathy for Islam as a religion of compassion (*rahmatan lil ‘alamin*). *Tablig* should reduce friction, disputes, and even conflicts in the name of religion by showing the values of religious moderation, such as love and compassion.

TGH. Nawawi Hakim interprets al-Baqarah, Verse 120, as a basic principle in living a religious life. He emphasized:

“Following the opinion of a person or group with no solid foundation will only make a person sway in endless confusion. Therefore, the best guidance in this life is the guidance that comes from Allah, namely the religion of Islam. It is clearly stated in the Qur’an. For example, the verse: *قل إن هدى الله هو الهدى*, and verse that states: *إن الدين عند الله الإسلام*.”⁵⁷

The author understands from the statement expressed by TGH. Nawawi that Islam is the only guide and religion to follow. However, he also tries to refute some people or groups who claim that these verses show the exclusivity of Islam so that Islam is considered a radical religion, with his statement as follows:

“Al-Qur’an’s strict narratives such as – *Inna al-dīna ‘inda Allāh al-Islām* dan *Qul inna hudallabi hūwal huda* – should not be understood that it shows Islam is anti-tolerance, does not accept differences and various forms of stigma that often appear lately.”

According to TGH. Nawawi, the Qur’an has many verses which show that Islam is a very tolerant religion. Its apostles are very moderate in carrying out *tablig*, one of which is the end of Surah al-Baqarah verse 119. Apart from that, there is also Surah al-Nur, Verse 52, which states that the Prophet was only tasked with conveying the message (*al-balāgh* atau *tabliḡh*). Allah also stated in Surah al-Ghāshiyah Verses 20-21 that the Prophet was only a warner. He has no power to control his people. Allah also said in Surah al-Baqarah verse 52 that religion has no compulsion. These verses give a strong message that there is no compulsion to believe. Islam only conveys the truth and reminds us of that truth. In addition, these verses provide options for people who want to have different beliefs, even if those beliefs are misguided.⁵⁸

The author sees that Surah al-Baqarah verse 119 is related to the next verse (verse 120). Verse 119 teaches about prioritizing the attitude of *bashīran* (the bearer of good news) in conveying

⁵⁶ Musthofa.

⁵⁷ Hakim, Interview with Nawawi Hakim.

⁵⁸ Hakim.

the truth of Islam. It confirms that Islam is a religion built and spread with compassion (*Rahmatan li al-'alamīn*). Meanwhile, *Rahmatan li al-'alamīn* is another term for moderation in Islam (*wasatīyat al-Islām*),⁵⁹ which aims to create peace for the universe by necessitating synergy and cooperation between Muslims and other religious communities.⁶⁰ Therefore, the delivery of the truth of Islam (*tablīg*) must still be carried out, even though the instructions (*al-hudā*) in verse 120 are explained as God's prerogative. However, *tablīg* must be carried out in ways that show that Islam is a religion that upholds the value of compassion (*Rahmatan lil 'alamīn*).

CONCLUSION

The verses that show moderation in the Qur'an from the perspective of *aqidah* can be categorized into four. First, faith and disbelief as personal matters; second, guidance belongs only to Allah SWT; third, differences of beliefs as God's will (*irādah*); and fourth; Prophet Muhammad as a messenger of Allah was sent as a bearer of good news. The author sees that the informants emphasize their interpretation from the *da'wah* and Islamic *tarbiyah* perspective. Understandably, the main activities of the Tuan Guru of West Lombok MUI are preaching and teaching. This study's results recommend further studies: 1) Analysis of the Role and Influence of Tuan Guru of MUI that further studies can explore the role of Tuan Guru of West Lombok MUI in influencing local communities in the context of religious moderation. The study can focus on how Tuan Guru promotes understanding of faith, guidance, belief, and the role of the Prophet in their *da'wah*; 2) Exploration of Understanding in Contemporary Contexts. Further studies can see understandings of faith, guidance, and beliefs adapting to contemporary contexts and challenges; 3) Study of Community Responses to Moderation Messages that further research can explore community responses to moderation messages conveyed by Tuan Guru of West Lombok MUI. It can help in understanding the impact the message can shape people's views and actions on religious moderation.

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⁵⁹ Toto Suharto, "Indonesianisasi : Penguatan Islam Moderat Dalam Lembaga Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia," *Al-Tabir* 17, no. 1 (2017): 155–78.

⁶⁰ Yusuf Suharto, "Pendidikan Islam Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin: Menolak Teroris," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 1 (2020): 61–73.

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