

**Christian-Islamic Relations in Medieval and Modern History:
Tracing the Roots of Revitalization Toward Tolerance**

Abbas Tekeng
(Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kendari)
abbas.iainkdi@gmail.com

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Abstract:

This paper aims to trace the roots of revitalization in the effort towards tolerance of Islamic and Christian relations in medieval to modern history. The method used is literature with a historical analysis approach. The results are: (1) the history of Islamic and Christian relations is very harmonious and even a strong friendship. This lasted until the caliphate of Bani Umayyah and Bani Abbasiyah reached its golden peak; (2) the tension between Islam and Christianity began to heat up when the caliphate of Bani Abbasiyah experienced a decline in the Middle Ages. In addition to the polemical and apologetic nature of the debate between Islamic and Christian leaders due to the expansion of the Islamic caliphate and the strengthening of the internal cohesion of the Christian world that encouraged Islamic and Christian rivalry, a series of Crusades also took place. This polemic gave birth to debates in which each side attacked and proved the advantages and beauty of its own religion and showed the weaknesses and ugliness of other religions; (3) the main cause of conflict between Islam and Christianity is not because the core teachings of the religion itself are intolerant and exclusive, but more determined and conditioned by the historical-economic-political situation surrounding Muslim communities in various places. This is where the importance of dialog that prioritizes the principle of equality, and brotherhood

that upholds tolerance between religious communities as shown by the Prophet Muhammad Saw.

Keywords: Christian-Islamic; Relationship; Modern History; Tolerance

Introduction

Christianity and Islam are the two largest religious institutions in the world. No wonder, if these two religions become the foundation for the development of civilization in the world. More than that, Islam and Christianity also share the same prophetic roots, which originate from the Prophet Abraham. Therefore, these two religions are referred to as Abrahamic religions.¹ Abrahamic religions, theologically these two religions have the same characteristics, namely monotheism (religion of tawhid). The concept of monotheism is often used as a basis for the two religions to find common ground, although conceptually they have some differences.²

When tracing further the points of similarity in Islamic teachings through the Qur'an, it is found that many texts contain universal values and principles for building good relations with other religions, especially Christianity. One of the principles taught by Islam is to uphold the value of tolerance.³ This value of tolerance is a manifestation of religious teachings that encourage more peace and harmony between human beings

¹ Hasyim Muhammad et al, *Christology in the Qur'an*, in the journal *Istiqro'*. Vol. 03 Number 01 2004, Direktorat Perguruan Tinggi Agama Islam Ditjen Kelembagaan Agama Islam, Depag RI, p. 248. 248. *Kristologi Qur'ani; Telaah Kontekstual Doktrin Kekristenan dalam al-Qur'an* (Cet. 5; Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2005), p. 7.

² There are at least 10 differences in the teachings of these two religions put forward by M. Fazlur Rahman. Among them can be seen in Christian teachings about the concept of the trinity (three in one God), Jesus is the son of God, and Adam and Eve's sins are not forgiven so every child born is sinful. In contrast to the teachings of Islam which adheres to pure monotheism (oneness of God), Jesus (Isa) is a human being who God gave a revelation. The sins of Adam and Eve are forgiven and every child born pure (fitrah) is not sinful because sin is due to deeds and not derivative. See further Muhammad Fazlur Rahman Ansari, *Islam dan Kristen dalam Dunia Modern*, terj. Drs. Wardhana, (Ttp: Amzah, 2000), p. 6-8

³ Arsyam, M., Zakirah, Z., & Ibrahim, S. (2021). Transmigration Village and Construction of Religious Harmony: Evidence From Mamasa of West Sulawesi. *Al-Ulum*, 21(1), 205-221. See for example QS. *He has prescribed for you the religion which He revealed to Noah, and which We revealed to you, and which We revealed to Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: establish the religion and do not be divided about it.* Also QS: al-Fussilat (41): 43: "It was not said to you (Muhammad) except what was said to the messengers before you". QS. al-Baqarah (2): 136: "Devotion is characterized by believing in the book that was revealed to the previous prophets. There is no difference between one messenger and another. QS. al-Hajj (22): 40: "The places of worship of all religions must be respected, defended and protected, just as mosques are protected because they are places of remembrance". QS. al-Baqarah (2): 256 "there is no compulsion to (enter) the religion (dien); surely the right way is clear from the wrong way". QS. Yunus (10): 99 "And if your Lord had willed, all the people of the earth would have believed. But do you (want to) force people to become believers?"

than permission to fight. Isn't religion and the Prophet sent for the happiness of mankind?⁴ The difference between one religion and another is only in terms of sharia.⁵ All religious believers are commanded to submit totally to God and not follow the trickery of the devil.⁶

The value of tolerance and harmony between religious communities has been implemented by the Prophet Saw. When leading the State of Medina.⁷ In addition, the Medina Charter is one of the textually documented historical evidence as a normative source as well as an actual model of how Muslim communities design patterns of interfaith relations. Through the Medina Charter, the arrangement of inter-religious relations in Islam has been exemplified by the Prophet after moving from Makkah to Medina.⁸ More or less the same attitude was also shown by Caliph Umar Bin Khattab when expanding to the city of Damascus.⁹

What was taught by Islam, which was then exemplified by the Prophet in building harmonious relations between Muslims and Christians, in fact in history, was not fully followed by the next human race, and there was often bloodshed due to wars in the name of religion, especially in the Crusades towards the Middle Ages. Since that event, the relationship between the two religions has been strained until the modern era.

Although the discussion of this paper is limited to the medieval and modern centuries, the author does not refer to and is not bound by the periodization set by certain historians because, in addition, different experts

⁴ QS. Al-Anbiya (21): 107. Kalin, I. (2010). Islam, Christianity, the Enlightenment: "A Common Word" and Muslim-Christian Relations. In *Muslim and Christian Understanding: Theory and Application of "A Common Word"* (pp. 41-56). New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.

⁵ QS. Al-Hajj (22): 67-68

⁶ QS. Al-Baqarah (2): 208.

⁷ *The tarikh* record describes how the tolerance of the Prophet Muhammad Saw. to his guests, Christian priests from Najran (Yemen) when they wanted to worship on Sunday and there was no church in Medina. The Prophet Muhammad invited them to use part of the mosque space as their place of worship. See Ahmad Syafi'i Mufid, *Pandangan ajaran Islam terhadap Kerukunan Hidup antar Umat Beragama*, jurnal Harmoni vol. v, edisi april-Juni 2006, Puslitbang Kehidupan Keagamaan Badan Litbang dan Diklat Depag RI. p. 14.

⁸ Ridwan, *Piagam Madinah dan Resolusi Konflik: Model Penataan Hubungan antar Umat Beragama*, Jurnal Harmoni vol. vii, No. 30 edisi April-Juni 2009, Puslitbang Kehidupan Keagamaan Badan Litbang dan Diklat Depag RI, p. 154.

⁹ When Umar received news from his war commander in Syria, Khalid bin Walid r.a. about his success in conquering Byzantine territory, especially the city of Damascus, his main message to Khalid bin Walid was not to interfere with the religious activities of the Jews and Christians, not to damage their synagogues, not to take the goods in the synagogues. And even finally a peace agreement was signed with the religious leaders there, mutual respect for religious activities carried out by their respective adherents, a kind of religious "existence". Muhammad Tholhah Hasan, *Prospek Islam dalam Menghadapi Tantangan Zaman*, (Cet. 6; Jakarta: Lantabora Press, 2005), p. 86.

set the time limit for each period.¹⁰ Also, this paper wants a continuity of development about Christian and Islamic relations in the history of world civilization. Therefore, this paper starts the discussion on the historical reality of the encounter between Islam and Christianity the relationship between the two religions in medieval and modern times, and the factors that influence the incidence of tension and conflict between Christianity and Islam.

The Historical Reality of the Encounter between Islam and Christianity

Before the revelation of the Qur'an, the people of Mecca and Medina had already embraced the religions of Judaism and Christianity (Nasrani). Mecca was a region inhabited by a business community that had a lot of contact with other communities outside the region. The business tradition, the people of Mecca often traveled outside the region such as to Palestine, Damascus, Syria, Abyssinia, and Ethiopia. These areas were the centers of the development of Christianity. Medina is an area inhabited by Jews.

The presence of the Qur'an was brought by the Prophet Muhammad. The Quraysh tribe, caused a variety of reactions from the community, especially from the adherents of Judaism and Christianity. Not all reactions that arise are negative reactions, but there are also those that show the truth of the Qur'an as a similar revelation and support the truth of the previous religion. In the Qur'an itself, it is widely stated that the teachings brought by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH are a direct continuation of God's revelations that were revealed earlier.

Most of the Christians living along the Arabian peninsula were monophysites and Nestorians, who had left the Great Church. The differences between the Great Church and the heretic groups were due to ethnic, linguistic and cultural differences. Consequently, these differences led to differences in understanding or interpreting scriptural texts. The Great Church group is identical to the power of Byzantium or the empire of Eastern Rome which has a Greek culture and Western Europe which has a Latin culture. Meanwhile, the Monophysites and Nestorians who live in Egypt, Coptic, and Syria are ethnic groups that are anti-Greek culture.

In Mecca, a small group of Monophysite and Nestorian Christians flourished when the Prophet Muhammad received his prophetic revelation. In general, the Christian groups that existed in Mecca were immigrants, who were not large in number. Most of them worked as merchants, laborers, and slaves. The group was a lay community with little religious knowledge. They

¹⁰ Arsyam, M., Zakirah, Z., & Ibrahim, S. (2021). Transmigration Village and Construction of Religious Harmony: Evidences From Mamasa of West Sulawesi. *Al-Ulum*, 21(1), 205-221. For example, Harun Nasution divides the periodization of Islamic history into three; Classical Period (650-1250 AD), Medieval Period (1250-1800 AD), Modern Period (1800 AD). See Harun Nasution, *Islam Ditinjau dari Berbagai Aspek I* (Cet. 5; Jakarta: UI-Press, 2001), p. 50.

were ordinary people who had little religious knowledge. The group was known as the Christians (*Nasara*), as revealed in QS. Al-Maidah (5): 82;

لَتَجِدَنَّ أَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا وَلَتَجِدَنَّ أَقْرَبَهُمْ مَوَدَّةً لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصَارَى ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قسيسين وَرهباناً وَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ

Meaning: "Surely you will find that the most violent people against those who believe are the Jews and the polytheists. And surely you will find that the people whose friendship is closest to those who believe are those who say: "We are Christians". This is because they have priests and monks among them and because they do not boast."

They are one of the groups considered heretical by the Greater Church because they do not use the church's official teachings. Their scriptures are apocryphal, as revealed in the Qur'an. In Mecca, the Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims had little contact with the Christians, unlike in Medina.

The relationship between Islam and Christianity when the Prophet Muhammad led the State of Medina was increasingly harmonious. This was evidenced by the attitude of the Prophet who was very tolerant of Christians who had visited Medina as a delegation of the Najran tribe. The delegation of 60 people was received by the Prophet at the Prophet's Mosque, staying at the mosque and some at the home of the Prophet's companions. They stayed a few days and even had time to conduct services in the Mosque with the permission of the Prophet. While in Medina there was a dialog between the Prophet and the leaders of the delegation. Before they returned, an agreement was made between the two parties stating that their lives, religion and property were fully protected by the Prophet.

Such assurances were confirmed by the Prophet Muhammad not only for the Christians of Najran, but also for Christians in general. He wrote a charter of guarantees for all Christians. They were given the position of *ahl zimmah*, that is, those whose lives, property and religion were fully protected. The charter also contained a condemnation of those who desecrated that security. Prophet Muhammad's attitude towards Christians was continued by the leaders during the time of *al-Khulafaur Rashidin*.¹¹

The same was also the attitude of the Umayyad caliphs who employed many Christians in the Islamic government bureaucracy, especially in Egypt and Syria. Infact, the first official language used in the Umayyad government palace was not Arabic, but Greek. In addition, some Christian figures gained

¹¹ For example, in his message to Muslim soldiers, Caliph Abu Bakr emphasized that they should not interfere with the freedom and sanctity of other religions. This was also the policy pursued by Caliph Umar bin al-Khattab as seen in his agreement with the Christians of the city of Aelia (now Jerusalem) known as the *mitsaq illiya'* (Aelia Charter). For more details see Taufik Abdullah, et. al., *Ensiklopedi Tematis Dunia Islam*, vol. 6. (Jakarta: PT Ichtiar Van Hoeve, tth.), p. 215.

an honorable place in the scientific field. The *baitul hikmah* (house of virtue), a scholarly institution founded by the seventh caliph of the Banu Abbas, al-Makmun b. Harun al-Rashid, was once headed by Christian scholars such as Hunain b. Ishaq.¹²

As such, the relationship between the two major religions was well-established and dialogically friendly until the medieval times gave birth to polemical and apologetic debates. The impact of this prolonged debate then gave birth to tensions between the two religions, especially when the Crusades erupted.

Relations between Christianity and Islam in the Middle Period

In medieval times most debates between Muslim and Christian leaders were polemical and apologetic. This was mainly due to the expansion of the Islamic caliphate and the growing internal cohesion of the Christian world, which felt threatened by this expansion. These developments encouraged the rivalry between Islam and Christianity, which, among other things, led to a series of Crusades. In the polemics between Islam and Christianity that took place during this period, each side tried to prove the merits and beauty of its religion and show the weaknesses and ugliness of the other religion. This attitude of Christians was not only on the part of Eastern Christians¹³ but also on the part of Western Christians¹⁴ and even among the Dominican Order.¹⁵

Meanwhile, Muslims were no less polemical in attacking Christianity and even criticism of Muslim leaders¹⁶ over Christianity increased, until the

¹² *Ibid.* p. 216

¹³ On the Eastern Christian side, one prominent figure was Nicetas (9th century) of Byzantium. He, for example, openly disparaged the Qur'an and the life of the Prophet Muhammad, especially concerning some of the wars he led and his marriage to Zainab bint Jahsh bin Ri'ah. *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Among the polemics and apologetics developed by Christians in the West was Eulogius (d. 859) of Cordoba, Bishop of Toledo, who accused the Prophet Muhammad of being aggressive in propagating Islam and the Qur'an of containing many nonsensical elements. Moreover, in the *Dialogus* of Pedro de al-Fonso (d. 1110), a Spanish Jew who converted to Christianity, Islam is mentioned as a religion that was spread by violence. For more details see W. Montgomery Watt, *Islam dan Peradaban Dunia: Pengaruh Islam atas Eropa Abad Pertengahan* (Cet III; Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2004), p. 105.

¹⁵ Among the Dominican Order, a prominent figure was the Spanish Ramon Marti (d. 1285), who stated that Islamic law should be rejected by Christians because many of its elements were "contrary to reason" or "contrary to the public good". See Thematic Encyclopaedia, pp. 216. See also Norman Daniel, *Imej Islam Abad Pertengahan dan awal Periode Modern dalam Peta Studi Islam: Orientalisme dan Arah Baru Kajian Islam di Barat* (Cet. I; Yogyakarta: Fajar Pustaka Baru, 2003), p. 179-211.

¹⁶ The criticisms made by Muslim figures were rebuttals to Christian writers' criticisms of Islam. For example, Ali bin Ahmad bin Said bin Hazm (d. 1064), a Spanish scholar understood *tahrif* literally and wrote several works to refute various criticisms of Islam. While Imam al-Gazzali (d. 1111) in *ar-Radd al-Jamil li Ilahiyyah Isa bi Sarih al-Injil*

end of the Middle Ages. Many works¹⁷ were produced by Islamic leaders in the polemical debate between these two religions.

Along with the debates and polemics between Islam and Christianity, the tension between the relations between these two religions has intensified since the crusades occurred. The Crusades, which lasted approximately between 1095-1244AD, were divided by historians into three generations in three periods and there were up to eight periods from Crusade I to Crusade VIII.¹⁸ The Crusades had several important consequences in world history because they brought Europe into direct contact with the Islamic world. The impact of the Crusades further worsened the political atmosphere in the Islamic world until it finally experienced destruction and decline. The entire civilization that had been built and nurtured for centuries was wiped out by the crusades and then came the Mongol troops from the Northeast who swept through the Islamic sultanates with their savagery and barbarism, robbing, killing, and destroying everything they controlled.

In the beginning, the crusades were caused by Christian resentment of Islamic rule that had passed through Byzantium's territories in Asia, North Africa and Southwest Europe. The conquest of the birthplace of Jesus (Palestine) increasingly made Christians protest loudly. In addition, Caliph al-Hakim bi Amrillah of the Fatimite dynasty destroyed the Holy *Sepulcher*, and the Turkish Saljuk rulers harassed and mistreated Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem. This caused the Christian world in Europe to be confused and angry with Islam until Pope Urbanus II of the Roman Catholic Church invited and mobilized forces to attack the Islamic world. At that time (November 26, 1095) a large meeting in Southern France announced by Pope Urbanus II the Holy War / Crusade.¹⁹

The centuries-long crusades left the Islamic world weak. This was one of the reasons that led to the Abbasid dynasty being unable to prevent the destruction of the world's greatest center of Islamic civilization, Baghdad,

(A Complete Rejection of the Lordship of Jesus based on the Bible) used the Christians' own scripture to criticize the theological arguments of Jesus' lordship. Anti-Christian polemics are also evident in various works on *kalam* (dialectical theology) written by Muslim theologians, such as Abu Bakr Muhammad bin al-Taqiuddin al-Baqillani (d. 1013) and Abu al-Ma'ali Abdul Malik bin Abdullah al-Juwaini (1058-1085).

¹⁷ These include Abu Usman Amr al-Jahiz's (d. 868) *Radd an-Nasara* (Rejection of Christians), Ali bin Rabban al-Tabari (d. 933) who wrote *Kitab ad-Din wa ad-Daulah* (Book on Religion and State).

¹⁸ According to Philip K. Hitti, the length of the war and the absence of clear boundaries between one war and the next made it difficult to divide and classify into a definite number. Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs: From the Earliest Times to the Present*, (Jakarta: PT Serambi Ilmu Semesta, 2008), p. 812.

¹⁹ M. Karim Abdullah, , *Sejarah Pemikiran dan Peradaban Islam*, (cet 1; Yogyakarta: Pustaka Book Publisher, 2007), p. 160.

both physically and culturally by the Mongol army led by Chengis' grandson, Hulagu Khan (1258 AD), in which many people were killed and their bodies thrown into the Tigris river so that the river water became brown due to the large number of handwritten books of scientists thrown into the river.²⁰

Meanwhile, the Crusades had a positive impact on the progress of Europe. Direct contact between the West and the East triggered the rise of the Renaissance in Europe. The Crusades increased Europe's importance in the field of commerce and trade. Europeans were able to learn, modify and apply some of the important findings that had been produced by Muslims in earlier times.²¹

Nonetheless, a friendly dialog between Muslim and Christian leaders also took place at that time. They even cooperated in a polemic between Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism at the Mongol Imperial Palace on May 30, 1254. As reported by Willem of Rubroek, the Franciscan priest who led the Christian delegation, in the dialogue Christianity and Islam united to emphasize their similarities and attack Buddhism. In addition, Francis (d. 1226) of Assisi, a Christian spiritual leader and founder of the Franciscan Order, visited Egypt at the time of the Crusades and asked members of his order to live peacefully with Muslims.

The desire for closer relations between Islam and Christianity was also evident when the Western Christian world began to see that the violent means of the Crusades were not effective in stopping the expansion of the Islamic caliphate, especially when Constantinople fell to Muslim forces in 1453. Christian leaders began to consider the possibility of intellectual dialogue to strengthen the common mission of Islam and Christianity. Such as Yohannes of Segovia (d. 1458), the Spanish Christian priest Nicholas of Cusa (d. 1464), the German Christian priest, and Aeneas Silvius (d. 1464), who later became Pope Pius II...

Meanwhile, one Muslim writer, ash-Syarastani (d. 1153), compiled a balanced work on non-Muslim religions. This Assyrian theologian was praised by

W. Montgomery Watt, a contemporary Christian scholar who has extensively researched the relationship between Islam and Christianity throughout

²⁰ According to Philip K. Hitti, the collapse of the Abbasid caliphate was more due to internal than external factors. In addition to its administrative methods that were not conducive to the creation of state stability, exploitation and excessive taxes were imposed on all people also because of the decentralization and division of power in areas that were less subject to the power of the central government and the division between Arabs and non-Arabs, between Arab Muslims and New Muslims, between Muslims and dhimmis was very sharp, making it easier for Hulagu Khan's troops to subjugate the territories of the Abbasid Bani to destroy the city of Baghdad finally easily. Read Philip K. Hitti, *op. cit.*, pp. 616-617.

²¹ The impact of Eastern and Western military contacts in the Crusades can be seen in Philip K. Hitti, p. 616-617

history, for showing an "objective scholarly attitude" towards Christianity through his work *Kitab al-Milal wa an-Nihal* (Book of religions and sects).²²

In the context of the historical realities above, the encounter between Islam and Christianity experienced an ambivalent relationship. At certain times and places, the relationship between the two was harmonious. At other times and places, the encounter between the two was polemical. Therefore, the understanding of the Qur'anic verse cannot be separated from the ambivalence of the relationship between Islam and Christianity.

Christian and Islamic Relations in the Modern Century

One that stands out in the early modern era is Western colonialism. Colonialism was a separate chapter in the relationship between Muslims and Christians. This was partly due to World War I (1914-1918), when the Middle East (West Asia), previously under the Ottoman Turkish caliphate, was divided into British, French and Italian domains; while Muslims in South Asia and Southeast Asia came under British, Dutch and US colonization.

It was during this period of colonialism that various missionary organizations grew and received the patronage of the colonial government.²³ The

activities of these institutions were mainly the dissemination of the Bible, the publication and dissemination of polemical and apologetic treatises, and the organization of public debates. To achieve this, Karl G. Pfander translated his highly polemical work on Islam and Christianity into Urdu under the title *Mizan al-Haqq* (the scales of truth). This work troubled Muslims so much that Rahmatullah Kaimuna (19th century), a Muslim leader, responded to Pfander's work by writing "*Izhar al-Haqq*" (Revealing the Truth).²⁴

At the end of the 19th century, some missionary leaders and organizations began to abandon this method. They began to take a new approach, spreading the teachings of the Bible through education and the organization of public health efforts. Nevertheless, the emphasis on conversion, in the *literal* sense of conversion from Islam to Christianity, remained strong. Cardinal Lavigerie (d. 1892), a French Catholic missionary leader, saw the goal of church mission as the gradual transformation of the

²² Taufik Abdullah, *et. al Ensiklopedi Tematis Dunia Islam*, Volume 6, (Jakarta: PT. Ichtiar van Hoeve, tth), p. 217-218.

²³ Ibrahim, S., & Khaerul Asfar. (2024). The Position of Women in the Dynamics of Modern Tafsir: Study of Tafsir Al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir by Muhammad Tahir Ibn 'Ashur. *Jurnal Ilmiah AL-Jauhari: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Interdisipliner*, 8(2), 259–272. <https://doi.org/10.30603/jiaj.v8i2.5204>.

For example, the *Anglican Missionary Society* was founded in England and the United States in the 18th and 19th centuries. In Africa, the *Society of Missionaries of Africa*, which is affiliated to Catholicism, was founded in 1885.

²⁴ Taufik Abdullah, *et. al. op. cit.*, p. 218. See also Albert Hourani, *Islam in European Thought* (Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 18.

whole individual, culture, and society, with priority given to the weakest groups in society.

In addition, the bad relations between Islam and Christianity during this period were also caused by some orientalist scholars who worked for the colonial government and wrote works that presented a bad image of Islam.²⁵ Meanwhile, most Muslims viewed colonialism as a continuation of the Crusades. In Islamic countries, most of the resistance against colonialism was spearheaded by Islamic leaders. Resistance was categorized as an act that was not only political but also *religious*, as *jihad fi sabilillah* (struggle in the way of Allah).

As was the case in medieval times, Christian writers' attacks on Islam were also met with responses from Muslim writers.²⁶ In the late nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries, many Muslims felt supported in their opposition to Christianity when they heard of *The Gospel of Barnabas*, a manuscript that supported Islam and opposed Christianity because it exposed the chaos and falsity of Christian doctrine.²⁷

The relationship between Islam and Christianity in the 20th century has begun to lead to contact and dialogue between Muslim and Christian leaders. These efforts have increasingly shown a desire for mutual understanding and cooperation. The people who usually take the initiative to carry out this contact and dialog are initially the Christians, Protestant and Catholic churches, and then the Muslims. This is because Christians, especially through colonialism, had their first intensive encounters with other religions, so they had to define the existence of these other religions within the context of Christian theology. Meanwhile, the Islamic side, being busy with various domestic affairs such as independence from colonialism and subsequent development, has only since the 1970s been able to participate

²⁵ One of the most prominent figures in this regard was William Muir (d. 1905), a British orientalist who worked for the British government in India and later became vice-chancellor of the University of Edinburgh (1885-1903). In *The Life of Muhammad*, for example, he states that the Prophet Muhammad was a mixture of good and bad qualities and that his worst qualities emerged when he led the Muslim community in Medina. Albert Hourani, *op. cit.* p. 19.

²⁶ The most prominent Islamic figures include Sir Sayid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), an Indo-Pakistani modernist thinker; Sayyid Djamaluddin al-Afghani 1838-1897), a pioneer of Pan Islamism; and Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), an Egyptian Islamic reformer. And the most defensive and even apologetic attitude in defense of Islam is most evident in Sayid Ameer Ali's (1849-1928) "*Short History of the Saracens*" and *The Spirit of Islam*. See Taufik Abdullah, *et. al, op. cit.* p. 219.

²⁷ Ibrahim, S., & Khaerul Asfar. (2024). The Position of Women in the Dynamics of Modern Tafsir: Study of Tafsir Al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir by Muhammad Tahir Ibn 'Ashur. *Jurnal Ilmiah AL-Jauhari: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Interdisipliner*, 8(2), 259–272. <https://doi.org/10.30603/jiaj.v8i2.5204>

and even organize various interfaith meetings themselves.

Although the development of interfaith dialogue through various meetings often experiences unsatisfactory results due to the dominance of certain religions, these efforts have given birth to several dialogue paradigms among Christian leaders. *First*, the exclusive paradigm is the paradigm that views Jesus as the only way of salvation. From the Islamic side this paradigm is understood that the concept of *ahl al-usb* is interpreted narrowly, i.e. all *ahl al-usb* have now deviated from their original teachings. *Second*, the inclusive paradigm that distinguishes between the presence of salvation and God's activity in part in other religious traditions and the full salvation and activity of God in Jesus Christ. Whereas in the Islamic tradition, this paradigm is understood that Islam came to continue and perfect the religion of revelation that came before. These two paradigms are criticized by the third paradigm, the *pluralist paradigm*. This paradigm understands that each religion has its own unique way of salvation. Therefore, the claim of Christianity or Islam that it is the only way (exclusive paradigm), or that it complements, or fills the other way (inclusive paradigm) must be rejected because it will only create a gap between the two. According to the pluralist paradigm, each religion has its own concept of salvation and should not be read through the eyes of another religion.²⁸

Forms of Christian and Islamic Relations

The history of Christian and Islamic relations has given birth to several typologies of religious attitudes that also describe the style of relations or contact between Christian communities and Islam, namely Exclusivism,²⁹ inclusivism,³⁰ pluralism,³¹ eclecticism,³² and universalism.³³

From the five religious typologies as a classification of very

²⁸ *Ibid*, p. 222.

²⁹ Exclusivism holds that the most correct teachings are only those of one's religion. Other religions are heretical and must be eradicated, or their adherents converted because both the faith and its adherents are cursed in God's sight. Having this type means that between two communities each has hatred, resentment and hostility.

³⁰ Inclusivism holds the view that there is also truth outside the religion it adheres to, even if it is not as complete or perfect as the religion it adheres to. This attitude is still found in theological tolerance and faith.

³¹ Pluralism that holds a more moderate view that theologically religious plurality is seen as a reality, undoubtedly that each stands on an equal footing so that the spirit of missionaries or preaching is considered irrelevant.

³² Eclecticism which views that a religious attitude that tries to choose and bring together various aspects of religious teachings that are considered suitable for itself so that the final format of a religion becomes a kind of eclectic mosaic.

³³ Universalism holds that basically, all religions are the same. It's just that due to historical, and anthropological factors, religion then appears in a plural format. <http://dodiilham.blogspot.com/2010/03/hubungan-kristen-dan-islam-periode.html>, (accessed on September 29, 2011)

interesting relationships between Christianity and Islam, the form of relationship or contact between the two is: *First*, a negative relationship (hate, envy, hostility, and suspicion). Christianity has been in contact with Islam for more than 14 centuries, a span of time so long and continuous that the relationship has witnessed various changes and the rise and fall of cultural and territorial boundaries between the two. It has also been characterized by long periods of confrontation as well as productive cooperation, but what has dominated the relationship between these faith traditions is hostility, hatred and suspicion. These attitudes led to tensions between the two communities (Christianity and Islam) partly because the leaders of the two communities failed to control religious fanaticism among their adherents. Another potentially divisive issue is the character and missionary activities (*dakwah*) of both Islam and Christianity, both of which claim that their teachings are the most correct and accepted by the Almighty.

Second, a positive relationship is characterized by cooperation in religious activities in rotation and mutual recognition of the existence of the two communities that both reveal the heavenly religion, such as Islam that understands verse 69 surah al-Maidah. The economic and social relations of the two communities (Christianity and Islam) appear to be friends and respect each other, but do not touch on the issue of faith and belief.³⁴

An ambivalent relationship that has the potential to build constructive dialog. In this relationship, dialogues of faith emerge in which both recognize the freedom of religion not only of their respective religious partners but also between religions. The leader's policy towards people of different religions is not discriminatory but must be democratic on the basis of religious freedom.

Entering the 21st century, the relationship between Christianity and Islam gave birth to a new paradigm, namely the humanist paradigm, the essence of which is moderation. Both religious and lay people who are moderate will tend to be polite and balanced. They are moderate in practicing their religion and social interaction, balanced in fulfilling material and spiritual needs, and individual and social in dealing with God, humans, and the natural environment. Those who are moderate will uphold justice and wisdom and not be easily provoked by anger, accusation, or force.

This humanism will make it easier to appreciate the *plurality* of religions (*pluralism*) that succeed in fostering relationships to establish togetherness. Pluralism will lead humanity to a new civilization that can erase the scales of the West and the East, especially the unhealthy relationship between religious communities, especially Christianity and Islam.³⁵

³⁴ *Ibid.* Chevedden, P. E. (2008). The Islamic view and the Christian view of the Crusades: A new synthesis. *History*, 93(310), 181-200.

³⁵ <http://dodiilham.blogspot.com/2010/03/hubungan-kristen-dan-islam-periode.html>, (accessed on September 29, 2024)

Factors causing tense Christian-Muslim relations

A pluralistic society is not only a characteristic of industrial society but the initial experience of the historicity of Islamic religion during the prophethood of Muhammad. The Prophet has given a concrete example and at the same time an example of understanding and appreciation of religious pluralism that is very real in front of his people. The Prophet did not demand a "*truth claim*" on behalf of himself or on behalf of the religion he embraced. He took the attitude of *agreeing in disagreement*. He did not force his religion to be accepted by others.³⁶ Without awareness from the bottom of his heart. There the Prophet Muhammad strongly recognized the existence and existence of other religions besides Islam.³⁷

In Islam, the foundations for living together in a religiously pluralistic society have been built on normative and historical foundations since the beginning. If there are problems that arise in the relationship between Islam and Christians/non-Muslims, the main cause is not because the core teachings themselves are intolerant and exclusive, but more determined and conditioned by the *historical- and economic-political* situation that surrounds the Muslim community in various places. Competition for control of economic resources, political power, and hegemony of power, is much more coloring the relationship between religious believers rather than the content of the ethical teachings of the "religion" itself.

Therefore, according to Amin Abdullah, for the sake of sharpness of analysis, the dimensions of religious teachings and the behavior of religious people need to be distinguished.³⁸ The behavior of religious people is not only determined by the normativity of their religious teachings but also determined by the *socio-historical* and political forces that surround them. Fundamental religious teachings are only a "*warning*" to the existence of various kinds of *historical-political-economic* barriers that are often sheltered under the emotional umbrella of certain theological schools.

Conclusion

From the above explanation it can be concluded: *First*, at the beginning of the historical reality, the relationship between Islam and Christianity was very harmonious and even a strong friendship. This lasted until the caliphate of Bani Umayyah and Bani Abbasiyah reached its golden peak. *Second*, the tension between Islam and Christianity began to heat up when the Abbasid caliphate declined in the Middle Ages. Apart from the polemical and apologetic

³⁶ QS. Al-Baqarah (2): 256.

³⁷ Amin Abdullah, *Studi Agama: Normativitas dan Historisitas*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2011), p. 74.

³⁸ *Ibid*, p. 75.

nature of the debate between Islamic and Christian leaders due to the expansion of the Islamic caliphate and the strengthening of the internal cohesion of the Christian world that encouraged Islamic and Christian rivalry, it was also due to a series of Crusades. These polemics gave birth to debates in which each side attacked and proved the merits and beauty of its own religion and pointed out the weaknesses and ugliness of other religions. *Third, the main cause of conflict between Islam and Christianity is not because the core teachings of the religion itself are intolerant and exclusive, but more determined and conditioned by the historical-economic-political situation surrounding Muslim communities in various places. In addition, the "truth claim" of each party also colors a lot of incompatibility between Islam and Christianity. This is where the importance of dialog that prioritizes the principle of equality, and brotherhood that upholds tolerance between religious communities as shown by the Prophet Muhammad Saw.*

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