

CHAPTER III

ZAMAKHSHARI AND SAYYID QUTB'S INTERPRETATION OF PLURALISM VERSES

A. Verses Related to Pluralism

The Qur'an addresses the theme of pluralism across various chapters, which, according to Husein Muhammad, can be categorized into at least two main themes. First, the interfaith brotherhood is discussed in Surah Ali Imran (3:84) and similar messages can be found also in Surah Al-Maidah (5:65, 66, 69), Surah Ali Imran (3:199), and Surah Al-Baqarah (2:62, 136). Second, the religious freedom is highlighted in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:256) and similar messages can be found also in Surah Al-Maidah (5:48), Surah Al-An'am (6:108), and Surah Ali Imran (3:64).¹ In addition, according to Subarul Adzim, there are some verses that emphasize Islam as the only truth in Surah Al-Maidah (5:54), Surah Ali Imran (3:19, 85), and Surah Al-Baqarah (2:111-112).²

In Surah Al-Baqarah (2:62) and Surah Al-Maidah (5:69), the People of the Book—followers of Islam, Judaism, Christianity, and Sabianism—are mentioned as equals who will receive peace, rewards, and forgiveness from Allah if they believe in Him, the Last Day, and perform good deeds. They are also promised abundant sustenance and entry into Paradise if they remain devout, as stated in Surah Al-Maidah (5:65-66). Additionally, Surah Ali Imran (3:199) mentions that among the People of the Book, there are those who submit to Allah, do not betray their faith, and will be rewarded with Paradise. The recognition of 'the truth' in Judaism and Christianity is further indicated in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:136), which references Moses and Jesus. Below are the verses.

¹ Hajar and Umayyah, "Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Pluralisme Agama Perspektif Husein Muhammad."

² IMAM SUBARUL ADZIM, "PENDEKATAN HERMENEUTIK DALAM MENAFSIRKAN AYAT-AYAT PLURALISME AGAMA."

1. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:62):

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّبِيَّانَ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ
*" Those who believe (in the Qur'an), and those who follow the Jewish
(scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians,- any who believe in
Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward
with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. "*³

2. Surah Al-Maidah (5:65):

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ ءَامَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَكَفَّرْنَا عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ جَنَّاتِ
النَّعِيمِ
*"If only the People of the Book had believed and been righteous, We
should indeed have blotted out their iniquities and admitted them to
gardens of bliss. "*⁴

3. Surah Al-Maidah (5:66):

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ أَقَامُوا التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَأَكَلُوا مِنْ
فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِن تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ ۗ مِنْهُمْ أُمَّةٌ مُّقْتَصِدَةٌ ۗ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ سَاءَ مَا يَعْمَلُونَ
*"If only they had stood fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation
that was sent to them from their Lord, they would have enjoyed
happiness from every side. There is from among them a party on the
right course: but many of them follow a course that is evil. "*⁵

³ trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, "The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary, Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 62," accessed February 28, 2025, <https://www.namazmani.net/quran/yusuf-ali/surah-al-baqarah-ayat-62.htm>.

⁴ trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, "The Holy Qur'an, Surah Al-Ma'idah, Ayat 65," accessed February 28, 2025, <https://surahquran.com/english-aya-65-sora-5.html>.

⁵ trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, "The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary, Surah Al-Ma'idah Ayat 66," accessed February 28, 2025, <https://www.namazmani.net/quran/yusuf-ali/surah-al-maidah-ayat-66.htm>.

4. Surah Ali Imran (3:199):

وَإِنَّ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَمَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ خَاشِعِينَ
لِلَّهِ لَا يَشْتُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ؕ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۖ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

*"And there are, certainly, among the People of the Book, those who believe in Allah, in the revelation to you, and in the revelation to them, bowing in humility to Allah: They will not sell the Signs of Allah for a miserable gain! For them is a reward with their Lord, and Allah is swift in account."*⁶

The context (*asbabun nuzul*) of Surah Ali Imran (3:199) relates to the death of Negus (*An-Najashi*), the king of Abyssinia, who was known for his fairness and protection of Muslims who migrated to his land. When news of his death reached Medina, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ informed his companions of Negus's passing and led them in a funeral prayer (*salat al-gha'ib*). The companions were surprised and asked, "O Messenger of Allah, are we to pray for an Abyssinian king who was among the People of the Book?" In response to their doubts, Allah revealed this verse to affirm that among the People of the Book are those who truly believe and will be rewarded by Allah.⁷

5. Surah Ali Imran (3:84):

قُلْ ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ
وَأَلْسَباطَ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَالنَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ
مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

"We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord: We

⁶ trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, "The Holy Qur'an, Surah Ali Imran, Ayat 199," accessed February 28, 2025, <https://surahquran.com/english-aya-199-sora-3.html>.

⁷ As-Suyuthi, *Asbabun Nuzul*, ed. Arif Hidayat (Solo: Insan Kamil, 2016). 143

make no distinction between one and another among them, and to Allah do we bow our will (in Islam).’⁸

This verse was revealed in response to a debate initiated by Ibn Shurayh, a Jewish leader, who confidently told the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ that true guidance is only found in Judaism. He insisted that the Prophet ﷺ should follow their teachings in order to attain the truth. Similarly, the Christians made a similar claim, asserting that their religion was the sole path to salvation.⁹

The verses about religious freedom explain the practical meaning of tolerance, detailing how to interact with followers of other religions, the etiquette of respecting their beliefs, and the boundaries of tolerance. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:256) prohibits compulsion in religion, Surah Al-Ma’idah (5:48) emphasizes the inevitability of religious diversity among humans, Surah Al-An’am (6:108) forbids insulting the deities of other religions, and Surah Ali Imran (3:64) highlights the principle of equality (*kalimah sawa’*) as a basis for unity rather than emphasizing differences. Below are the verses.

1. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:256):

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

"Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things."¹⁰

This verse was revealed in two incidents involving the *Ansar* (the helpers of Medina). In the first incident, a woman vowed to raise her child as a Jew if the child survived infancy. When the Jewish tribe of Bani Nadhir was expelled from Medina, some *Ansar* children who had been raised as Jews were to be returned to their

⁸ trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, "The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary Surah Ali Imran, Ayat 84," accessed February 28, 2025, <https://www.namazmani.net/quran/yusuf-ali/surah-al-imran-ayat-84.htm>.

⁹ As-Suyuthi, *Asbabun Nuzul*. 117

¹⁰ trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, "The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 256," accessed February 28, 2025, <https://www.namazmani.net/quran/yusuf-ali/surah-al-baqarah-ayat-256.htm>.

Muslim parents. However, Allah revealed this verse to confirm that there should be no compulsion in matters of religion.

In another narration, a man named Al-Hushain, who was a Muslim, had two sons who were Christians. He asked the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) if he could force his sons to convert to Islam. In response, Allah revealed this verse, emphasizing that religion cannot be forced, as the truth is clear and every individual has the freedom to choose their beliefs.¹¹

2. Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:48):

لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا ۗ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ ۗ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ ۗ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

“To each among you have we prescribed a law and an open way. If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute.”¹²

3. Surah Al-An'am (6:108):

يُولَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ كَذَلِكَ زَيَّنَّا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلَهُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ
"Revile not ye those whom they call upon besides Allah lest they out of spite revile Allah in their ignorance. Thus have We made alluring to each people its own doings. In the end will they return to their Lord and We shall then tell them the truth of all that they did.”¹³

This verse was revealed when some Muslims insulted the idols worshiped by polytheists. In response, the disbelievers retaliated by insulting Allah. This verse

¹¹ As-Suyuthi, *Asbabun Nuzul*. 97

¹² trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, “The Holy Qur’an: Text, Translation and Commentary, Surah Al-Maidah, Ayat 48,” accessed February 28, 2025, <https://www.namazmani.net/quran/yusuf-ali/surah-al-maidah-ayat-48.htm>.

¹³ trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, “The Holy Qur’an, Surah Al-An’am, Ayat 108,” accessed February 28, 2025, <https://www.alim.org/quran/compare/surah/6/108/>.

was revealed to prohibit Muslims from insulting the deities of others, as it could lead to reciprocal disrespect toward Allah without justification.¹⁴

4. Surah Ali Imran (3:64):

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ
وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ ۗ فَإِن
تَوَلَّوْا فَعُولُوا أَشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ

*"Say, "O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you - that we will not worship except Allah and not associate anything with Him and not take one another as lords instead of Allah." But if they turn away, then say, "Bear witness that we are Muslims [submitting to Him]."*¹⁵

On the other hand, some verses in the Qur'an convey the message of a singular truth, rejecting the validity of religions other than Islam. In Surah Al-Baqarah (2:111-112), Surah Ali 'Imran (3:19, 85), Allah affirms that "the true religion in the sight of Allah is Islam," that "any religion other than Islam will not be accepted," and that "Paradise is only for those who submit to Allah (aslama)." Furthermore, Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:54) emphasizes that if someone apostasizes, their position as Allah's representatives on Earth (caliphs) will be revoked and replaced by others who uphold the faith. Below are the verses.

1. Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:54):

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مَن يَرْتَدَّ مِنكُمْ عَن دِينِهِ ۖ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ
وَيُحِبُّونَهُ ۖ أَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا
يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَسِعَ عَلِيمٌ

" O ye who believe! if any from among you turn back from his Faith, soon will Allah produce a people whom He will love as they will love Him,- lowly with the believers, mighty against the rejecters, fighting in the way of Allah, and never afraid of the reproaches of such as find

¹⁴ As-Suyuthi, *Asbabun Nuzul*. 263

¹⁵ trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, "The Holy Qur'an, Surah Ali Imran, Ayat 64," accessed February 28, 2025, <https://surahquran.com/english-aya-64-sora-3.html>.

fault. That is the grace of Allah, which He will bestow on whom He pleaseth. And Allah encompasseth all, and He knoweth all things."¹⁶

2. Surah Ali Imran (3:85):

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

*"If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah), never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter He will be in the ranks of those who have lost (All spiritual good)."*¹⁷

3. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:111-112):

وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصْرِيًّا تِلْكَ أَمَانِيُّهُمْ قُلْ هَاتُوا

بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ۝ ۱۱۱ بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ

أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ ۝ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ۝ ۱۱۲

*"And they say: "None shall enter Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian." Those are their (vain) desires. Say: "Produce your proof if ye are truthful. Nay,-whoever submits His whole self to Allah and is a doer of good,- He will get his reward with his Lord; on such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."*¹⁸

4. Surah Ali Imran (3:19):

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ ۝ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ

مَا جَاءَهُمْ الْعِلْمُ بَعِيًا بَيْنَهُمْ ۝ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

"The Religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His Will): Nor did the People of the Book dissent therefrom except through envy of each

¹⁶ trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, "The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary, Surah Al-Ma'idah, Ayat 54," accessed February 28, 2025, <https://www.namazmani.net/quran/yusuf-ali/surah-al-maidah-ayat-54.htm>.

¹⁷ trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, "The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary, Surah Ali Imran, Ayat 85," accessed February 28, 2025, <https://www.namazmani.net/quran/yusuf-ali/surah-ali-imran-ayat-85.htm>.

¹⁸ trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, "The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary, Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 112," accessed February 28, 2025, <https://www.namazmani.net/quran/yusuf-ali/surah-al-baqarah-ayat-112.htm>.

other, after knowledge had come to them. But if any deny the Signs of Allah, Allah is swift in calling to account."¹⁹

B. Interpretation of al-Kashshāf

Tafsir al-Kashshāf presents a rigorous analysis of the Qur'anic perspective on universal truth, particularly regarding the exclusivity of Islam as the final and ultimate divine guidance. Various Qur'anic verses affirm that previous religious communities were required to follow the truth as it was revealed to them, but with the advent of Prophet Muhammad, complete submission to Islam became necessary for salvation.

Al-Baqarah 2:62 describes the Sabeans (*Sabi'in*), a group that had departed from the teachings of Judaism and Christianity and had turned to the worship of angels. The verse highlights that true faith (من آمن) refers to belief that is pure, uncorrupted, and fully aligned with Islam. According to Tafsir al-Kashshāf, if the Sabeans or any other religious community were to encounter the truth in the form of the final revelation brought by Prophet Muhammad, they would be required to follow him. This establishes the principle that prior religious adherence is only valid in the absence of knowledge about Islam; once the final message is known, embracing it becomes obligatory.²⁰

Al-Ma'idah 5:65 reinforces this notion by stating that true faith requires belief in the Prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an, accompanied by *taqwa* (God-consciousness). Faith alone is insufficient unless it is complemented by righteous conduct and adherence to divine guidance.

وَأَنْ الْإِيمَانَ لَا يَنْجِي وَلَا يَسْعَدُ إِلَّا مَشْفُوعًا بِالتَّقْوَى

"Faith does not save or bring happiness unless it is accompanied by piety."

¹⁹ trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, "The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary, Surah Ali Imran, Ayat 19," accessed February 28, 2025, <https://www.namazmani.net/quran/yusuf-ali/surah-al-imran-ayat-19.htm>.

²⁰ Al-Zamakhshari, *Tafsir Al-Kashaf 'an Haqa'iq Tanzil Wa 'Uyun Al-Aqawil Fi Wujuh Al-Ta'wil*. 80

This interpretation underscores the Qur'anic emphasis on both belief and practice as essential components of true religion.²¹

Al-Ma'idah 5:66 further elaborates on this principle by stressing the importance of upholding the laws and prescribed limits found in previous scriptures, particularly those concerning the prophecy of Muhammad. Some interpretations argue that this also includes the necessity of adhering to the Qur'an's teachings. This suggests that recognizing the prophethood of Muhammad and the authenticity of the Qur'an is an integral part of fulfilling the obligations set forth in earlier revelations.²²

Al-Baqarah 2:136-137 presents a strong assertion that Islam is the only true religion. The term *بمثل* (translated as "the same") does not imply the existence of any alternative religion that is equal to Islam. This interpretation is reinforced by Ali 'Imran 3:85, which explicitly negates the possibility of any religion other than Islam being accepted by God.²³

وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

"And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter, he will be among the losers."

According to Tafsir al-Kashshāf, the claim of religious equivalency is inherently self-contradictory, as every religion naturally asserts its own exclusive truth while rejecting the validity of others. Any assertion that multiple religions hold equal truth is therefore a superficial diplomatic gesture rather than a substantive theological position. Ultimately, the Qur'an guarantees that Islam will prevail over all other religions, affirming its status as the final and absolute divine truth.

Tafsir al-Kashshāf presents a critical perspective on the Qur'anic concept of tolerance, distinguishing between genuine religious tolerance and misguided compromises that distort divine law. While Islam upholds freedom of belief and mutual respect, it also warns against relativism that leads to the abandonment of

²¹ Al-Zamakhshari. 300

²² Al-Zamakhshari. 300

²³ Al-Zamakhshari. 99

religious principles. Several Qur’anic verses highlight the boundaries of tolerance, emphasizing that it must not come at the expense of truth.

Al-Baqarah 2:256 establishes that faith cannot be imposed by force but must be nurtured through understanding and experience (*tajribah*). This principle is further reinforced in Yunus 10:99, which states that had God willed, all of humanity would have been believers, yet He granted them the freedom to choose.

وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَأَمَنَّ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كُلَّهُمْ جَمِيعًا ۖ أَفَأَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتَّىٰ يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ

"And had your Lord willed, all those on earth would have believed together. Would you then compel people to become believers?"

The rationale behind this divine decree is that faith and disbelief have been clearly distinguished through evident signs, making coercion unnecessary. According to Tafsir al-Kashshāf, true belief arises from conviction, not compulsion, as faith that is forced lacks sincerity.²⁴

Al-Ma’idah 5:48 warns against compromising divine law under the pretext of tolerance. The verse emphasizes that Muslims must not follow the desires of others to the extent of altering God’s legislation. Tafsir al-Kashshāf critiques the idea of tolerance when it becomes an illusion serving personal or political interests rather than a commitment to justice and truth. True tolerance does not mean distorting religious principles for the sake of appeasement but rather maintaining integrity while coexisting with others.²⁵

Ali ‘Imran 3:64 introduces the concept of *kalimah sawa*, the common ground between Islam, Judaism, and Christianity—namely, the belief in one God (tawhid). This verse calls upon the People of the Book to unite upon the shared doctrine of monotheism. However, historical reality shows that many among them have strayed by worshiping Uzair, Jesus, and their religious authorities, attributing to them divine legislative power. Tafsir al-Kashshāf interprets this as a fundamental deviation, as sovereignty in lawmaking belongs solely to God. The verse thus clarifies that true

²⁴ Al-Zamakhshari. 146

²⁵ Al-Zamakhshari. 293

religious dialogue must be based on theological integrity rather than overlooking essential differences for the sake of superficial harmony.²⁶

Al-An'am 6:108 provides guidance on the limits of religious engagement. It instructs believers not to insult the deities of other faiths, as this would provoke retaliatory blasphemy against God. Tafsir al-Kashshāf explains that God, in His wisdom, forbids actions that result in greater harm. If an act of *nahi munkar* (forbidding evil) leads to an increase in wrongdoing rather than its reduction, then that act itself becomes impermissible. This verse demonstrates that tolerance in Islam is not about passively accepting falsehood but about engaging with wisdom and avoiding actions that would push people further from the truth.²⁷

The concept of religious exclusivity in Islam is deeply rooted in the principles of monotheism and justice. Analyzing verses such as Al-Ma'idah 54, Ali 'Imran 19, and Al-Baqarah 111-112 through the lens of Al-Kashshāf's tafsir offers insight into how these principles shape the theological and sociopolitical dimensions of Islamic thought.

Al-Ma'idah 54 highlights the issue of apostasy as a destabilizing force within the Muslim community. Apostasy, in this context, is not merely an individual departure from faith but a phenomenon that can incite discord and enmity. The historical precedent set by Abu Bakr's firm stance against false prophets underscores the necessity of maintaining communal integrity. This verse emphasizes that true love for God is manifested through obedience rather than emotional expressions or ritualistic acts alone. The struggle in the path of God is portrayed as an essential commitment, reinforcing the idea that faith must be demonstrated through action.²⁸

Ali 'Imran 19 establishes monotheism and justice as the two fundamental principles of Islam. The concept of equality within Islam reflects this justice, asserting that no created being deserves worship or exaltation apart from God. The deviation of the People of the Book began when their religious leaders prioritized

²⁶ Al-Zamakhshari. 175-176

²⁷ Al-Zamakhshari. 341

²⁸ Al-Zamakhshari. 295-296

worldly interests over divine guidance. Their pursuit of power led to a hierarchical system in which religious superiority was used as a means of subjugation. This sense of superiority was further demonstrated in their condescending attitude toward the Quraysh, whom they perceived as unlettered and unworthy of divine revelation. The verse underscores that deviation from true faith occurs when religious leadership is driven by personal ambition rather than divine mandate.²⁹

Al-Baqarah 111-112 challenges the exclusivist claims of the Jews and Christians regarding salvation. Their inability to provide substantive proof for their assertions reveals the inherent weakness in their argument. The Qur'an's directive to submit entirely to God serves as both a theological and psychological response to their objections. It suggests that their reluctance to surrender to divine will stems from an attachment to worldly gains and a resistance to genuine submission. The emphasis on surrendering to God highlights the necessity of sincerity and the rejection of self-serving interpretations of faith.³⁰

C. Interpretation of Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān

Sayyid Qutb in his work interprets the verses classified as indicating 'universal truth', highlighting the basic principles of divine guidance and the need to adhere to the right path. In essence, these verses emphasize that salvation will only be achieved by those who submit and obey God Almighty.

Al-Baqarah 2:62 states that Jews, Christians, and Sabians who truly believed in God, followed His commands, and acted righteously were promised salvation. However, this applied specifically to those who lived before the prophethood of Muhammad. With his advent, the only path to salvation became Islam, as it represents the final and complete revelation of divine guidance. This verse emphasizes the historical transition in religious truth, where previous communities were judged based on their sincere adherence to their respective revelations, whereas the final dispensation requires complete submission to Islam.³¹

²⁹ Al-Zamakhshari. 164-165

³⁰ Al-Zamakhshari. 91-92

³¹ Sayid Qutub, *Fī Zilāl Al-Qur'ān*. 90-91

Al-Ma'idah 5:65-66 further elaborates on the role of divine scriptures in guiding religious communities. It states that had the People of the Book truly upheld their original scriptures—namely, the Torah and the Gospel—they would have found righteousness and divine rewards. However, the verse acknowledges that only a small fraction of them, termed *ummat muqtasidah* (those who are just and upright), remained truthful in their practice, while the majority deviated. This highlights that divine guidance is not limited to theological beliefs but extends to real-life applications, shaping societal norms and moral conduct. The principle of following God's *manhaj* (divine methodology) is not exclusive to the People of the Book but applies to all who seek righteousness. Before the advent of Islam, this guidance was manifested in the Torah and Gospel, but after the final prophethood, it is solely embodied in the Qur'an. Thus, true submission to God now requires adherence to Islam.³²

Ali 'Imran 3:199 acknowledges that there remains a group among the People of the Book who sincerely believe in God and the final revelation. These individuals exhibit signs of true faith: humility, submission, and refusal to trade their religious convictions for worldly gain. Their devotion underscores the idea that sincerity and adherence to divine principles remain essential for guidance, regardless of historical transitions in religious law.³³

Lastly, Al-Baqarah 2:136 reinforces the unity of all prophetic messages, emphasizing that belief in all prophets is a fundamental component of faith. The Qur'an presents the continuity of divine guidance through a series of messengers, each reinforcing the central tenet of monotheism (*tawhid*) and the divine methodology (*manhaj*). This affirms that Islam is not a departure from previous revelations but rather their culmination, providing a comprehensive and universal framework for faith and life.³⁴

According to Sayyid Qutb, the Qur'an presents a comprehensive view of tolerance, emphasizing the importance of mutual respect, religious freedom, and

³² Sayid Qutub. 273-279

³³ Sayid Qutub. 252

³⁴ Sayid Qutub. 144

avoiding coercion in matters related to faith. Several verses highlight the need to maintain individual convictions and the limitations placed on human authority in matters of religion and law.

Al-Baqarah 2:256 establishes a fundamental principle of religious freedom by stating that there is no compulsion in faith. This verse underscores that belief is a matter of personal conviction and inner acceptance, not something that can be imposed through force or coercion. Faith, according to the Qur'an, must be embraced willingly for it to be genuine, reaffirming the idea that religious adherence cannot be dictated by external pressures. This principle sets a foundational basis for tolerance in Islam, ensuring that individuals are free to choose their beliefs without fear of persecution or coercion.³⁵

Al-Ma'idah 5:48 further develops the Qur'anic perspective on pluralism by acknowledging the diversity of religious laws and communities as part of God's divine will. While the Qur'an recognizes pluralism as an inevitable reality, it simultaneously asserts that the ultimate legal framework is determined by divine law, as revealed in Islam. The verse implies that human desires to legislate independently of divine guidance are restricted, affirming that true justice is rooted in God's commandments. This reflects an Islamic understanding of tolerance—not as the unrestricted coexistence of all legal systems, but as an acceptance of religious diversity within the framework of divine law.³⁶

Ali 'Imran 3:64 provides an approach to interfaith dialogue based on common principles. The verse calls for unity on the fundamental doctrine of monotheism (*kalimah sawa'*), rejecting polytheism and the subjugation of humans to other beings. It emphasizes that all people are equal, and none should be worshiped or placed above others as divine entities. This verse promotes tolerance by encouraging a shared understanding between religious communities, focusing on commonalities rather than differences. The Qur'an thus advocates engagement with

³⁵ Sayid Qutub. 342-343

³⁶ Sayid Qutub. 243

other faiths on the basis of mutual respect and shared values, reinforcing a model of tolerance grounded in monotheistic belief.³⁷

Al-An'am 6:108 provides guidance on maintaining respect in religious discourse. The verse advises believers not to insult the deities worshiped by others, as this would provoke reciprocal insults toward God. It acknowledges the natural human tendency to defend what one holds sacred and highlights the counterproductive nature of mockery and insult in religious discussions. Rather than engaging in confrontational debates or condemning others' beliefs, the Qur'an encourages a non-interventionist approach, allowing people to follow their convictions without interference. This verse reinforces the idea that guidance cannot be forced through ridicule but must come through respectful dialogue and understanding.³⁸

The Qur'an also presents a clear statement of the privilege of truth in matters related to faith, establishing that divine guidance is exclusive and non-negotiable. Sayyid Qutb said that several verses reinforce the idea that true submission to God follows a single path, and any deviation from this path results in error or contradiction.

Al-Ma'idah 5:54 introduces two dimensions of apostasy: the first relates to allegiance, loyalty, leadership, obedience, and submission to disbelievers in their rejection of faith, while the second pertains to abandoning religious devotion to God. This distinction places the issue firmly within the realm of *aqidah* (creed), as the Qur'an states that whoever takes disbelievers as their *awliya* (protectors, allies, or leaders) becomes one of them. Consequently, God removes such individuals from their role as His vicegerents (*khalifatullah*) on Earth. However, this verse also reaffirms human free will, highlighting that God allows individuals to choose between truth and falsehood, even though the ultimate standard of righteousness is divinely ordained.³⁹

³⁷ Sayid Qutub. 81

³⁸ Sayid Qutub. 182

³⁹ Sayid Qutub. 258

Al-Baqarah 2:111-112 further critiques the flawed reasoning of those who claim exclusive salvation without substantiating their arguments with clear evidence. Both groups referenced in the verse engage in contradictory and unfounded assertions, lacking any legitimate proof. The Qur'an refutes such claims by declaring that the only valid path to salvation is true submission to God, which, in its final and complete form, is embodied in Islam. This verse highlights that human-made interpretations of religious exclusivity, when detached from divine revelation, are inherently flawed and cannot serve as a basis for truth.⁴⁰

Ali 'Imran 3:19 builds upon this principle by asserting that since there is only one true deity (*uluhiyyah wahidah*), it follows that there should be only one true religion (*dainunah wahidah*). The concept of divine singularity necessitates religious unity, as fragmentation in religious belief contradicts the fundamental oneness of God. Islam, being the final and perfected revelation, is presented as the only valid system of faith and guidance, ensuring a direct and uncorrupted connection between humanity and its Creator.⁴¹

D. Comparative Analysis of The Interpretation of al-Kashshāf and Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān

Zilāl al-Qur'ān

The following is a comparison between al-Kashshāf and Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān from theological, social, cultural and historical background aspects.

Aspect	Tafsir al-Kashshāf (Zamakhshari)	Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān (Sayyid Qutb)
Theology	Influenced by Mu'tazilah thought, which emphasizes reason, God's justice, and the concept of humans having the freedom to choose guidance or error. God does not force faith on anyone, so faith must come from rational understanding.	Based on the Salafi-activist understanding that sees Islam as the only path to salvation. Upholding the concept of Hakimiyyatullah (absolute sovereignty of God), which means that laws and rules must come entirely from God without human intervention.
Social	Emphasizing that pluralism in Islamic society can only occur if	Prioritizing resistance to social systems that are considered to

⁴⁰ Sayid Qutub. 126

⁴¹ Sayid Qutub. 49

Aspect	Tafsir al-Kashshāf (Zamakhshari)	Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān (Sayyid Qutb)
	all individuals accept Islam as the source of absolute truth. Social balance will be achieved when Islamic law is upheld and not compromised by worldly interests.	deviate from Islam, especially in the face of the influence of secularism and imperialism. Emphasizing the importance of forming an Islamic society that upholds sharia and opposes tyranny.
Culture	Demonstrates a more scientific and philosophical approach to understanding the texts of the Qur'an, with a focus on the beauty of Arabic, rhetoric, and rational argumentation.	More revolutionary and ideological in nature, with an emphasis on the application of Islam in real life and the urgency of social change through Islam as a perfect system of life.
History	Written in the 12th century AD (Seljuk Dynasty era) when Islamic civilization was still strong and politically stable. The focus of its interpretation is more on the rationalization of religious texts within a broad scientific framework, not to oppose a particular ideology or political system.	Written in the 20th century AD in the context of Egypt facing colonialism and secularization. This interpretation was born from Sayyid Qutb's struggle against a regime considered anti-Islamic, so its interpretation is greatly influenced by political conditions and Islamic struggles.

The following is a comparison of both interpretation of the Qur'an regarding each classification of verses.

Aspect	Tafsir al-Kashshāf (Zamakhshari)	Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān (Sayyid Qutb)
Interfaith Brotherhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pure faith: <i>Man aamana</i> in the verses of pluralism means believing with a clean faith and entering Islam truly. If someone finds the truth in Islam after the arrival of the Messenger of Allah, then he must follow it. • The law in the previous book must be upheld: Upholding the laws of the Torah and the Gospel, including the characteristics of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety before and after the arrival of the Prophet: Jews, Christians and Sabians had the opportunity to gain salvation before the Messenger of Allah was sent, but after that only Islam was the way of salvation. • Faith must be accompanied by the application of the Shari'a: If the People of the Book truly follow Allah's <i>manhaj</i>, they will receive guidance, but only a few of them are honest and upright (<i>ummat muqtashidah</i>),

Aspect	Tafsir al-Kashshāf (Zamakhshari)	Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān (Sayyid Qutb)
	<p>Messenger of Allah mentioned in the book.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no other religion that is equal to Islam: The phrase <i>bimithli</i> in Al-Baqarah 136-137 does not mean that there is another religion that can be an alternative equal to Islam, as emphasized in Ali 'Imran 85. • Every religion must claim absolute truth: It is impossible for there to be an alternative religion that is equally true, because each religion claims the exclusivity of truth. • The statement of alternative truth is mere diplomacy: The claim that all religions are true is often only for the sake of maintaining social harmony, not based on substantial belief. 	<p>while most of them are bad in their deeds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition of holy books: Before the Messenger of Allah, the Torah and the Gospel were the guidelines, but after him, the Qur'an was the only guide. • Unity of the prophets' treatises: The mention of the names of the prophets in the Qur'an shows that all the treatises carry the same monotheism and <i>manhaj</i> of Allah.
Religious Freedom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no compulsion in faith: Faith is not the result of compulsion, but the result of a process of understanding and experience (<i>tajribah</i>), as emphasized in Yunus 99. • Tolerance does not mean changing the law of Allah: Following human desires and changing the law of Allah is not a form of true tolerance, but only an illusion of interest. • <i>Kalimah Sawa'</i> as a meeting point: The agreement between Islam, Judaism, and Christianity is monotheism, but in fact they actually elevate Uzair, Isa, and their 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith is a matter of the heart, not compulsion: There is no compulsion in believing as confirmed in Al-Baqarah 256. • Plurality is a reality, but law only belongs to Islam: Allah created a diversity of religions, but the only valid law is Islamic law, and humans are prohibited from making their own laws. • <i>Kalimah Sawa'</i> as a meeting point: Worship only Allah without shirk, and reject servitude to creatures. All humans are equal and no one is superior and worthy of worship. • Respect other people's beliefs: Every human being tends to defend their religion, so

Aspect	Tafsir al-Kashshāf (Zamakhshari)	Fi Zilāl al-Qur’ān (Sayyid Qutb)
	monks as children and representatives of God. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prohibition of forbidding evil if it has a bad impact: If forbidding evil actually causes greater evil, then it becomes a sin. 	insulting other people's beliefs will actually distance them from the truth. Therefore, believers do not need to interfere in the internal affairs of other religions.
Single Truth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apostasy must be eradicated: Apostasy is not only an individual problem, but can incite others and ignite conflict. • <i>Tawhid</i> and justice as the main principles of Islam: Equality in Islam reflects justice, namely that no creature has the right to be worshipped. • Inability to prove the truth: Those who reject Islam do not have strong arguments to defend the validity of their beliefs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two forms of apostasy: Apostasy can involve giving allegiance and leadership to unbelievers or abandoning the direct worship of Allah. Allah revokes their role as khalifatullah, but still gives them the freedom to choose the path of truth or error. • Single religion concept: If God is one (uluhiyah wahidah), then there must be one religion (dainunah wahidah).

In terms of interfaith brotherhood, Zamakhshari’s Tafsir al-Kashshāf emphasizes that true faith must be pure and uncorrupted. According to his interpretation, if one finds the truth in Islam—especially after the final revelation through the Messenger of Allah—then one must embrace it fully. He underscores that previous religious laws (from the Torah and the Gospel) are to be upheld only until the advent of Islam; once the final revelation has arrived, no alternative religion can be considered equal. The term *bimithli*, as explained in the tafsir, does not imply that another religion can stand on equal footing with Islam. Rather, every religion inherently claims absolute truth, and any assertion that different religions are equally valid is seen as nothing more than diplomatic rhetoric meant to preserve social harmony rather than reflecting substantive theological equality.

Meanwhile, Sayyid Qutb’s Fi Zilāl al-Qur’ān similarly contends that salvation was accessible to Jews, Christians, and Sabians before the advent of the Prophet

Muhammad, but after his arrival, Islam becomes the sole pathway to salvation. He argues that the divine methodology (*manhaj*) of Allah is not only a matter of belief but also a comprehensive guide covering all aspects of life. Thus, while the earlier scriptures provided guidance for their time, the Qur'an supersedes them by offering a unified and final revelation that all must follow. Qutb's approach reinforces the idea of the unity of the prophets' treatises, stressing that all earlier revelations, though varied in form, ultimately carry the same monotheistic message.

Regarding religious freedom, Zamakhshari maintains that there is no compulsion in faith; genuine belief must result from a process of understanding and personal experience (*tajribah*). However, he cautions that true tolerance does not entail modifying or diluting the divine law to accommodate human desires. He points out that while the *kalimah sawa'* might serve as a superficial point of convergence between Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, in practice the latter religions often elevate figures like Uzair or Isa to positions that conflict with the exclusive worship of Allah. Additionally, he asserts that forbidding evil is permissible only if it does not result in greater harm—otherwise, it becomes counterproductive.

Qutb also upholds the principle that faith is a matter of the heart and not of external compulsion (as noted in Al-Baqarah 256). He acknowledges that plurality is an inherent aspect of human society, yet he insists that the legal and moral framework provided by Islam remains supreme and unchallengeable. For Qutb, respect for others' beliefs is important; however, interfering in the internal religious affairs of others or allowing human whims to alter divine law is not acceptable and ultimately undermines the truth.

On the aspect of single truth, Zamakhshari argues that apostasy is a dangerous threat that can incite broader discord within the community. He emphasizes that the principles of tawhid (monotheism) and justice dictate that no created being is worthy of worship, and that those who reject Islam fail to present compelling evidence for their claims. Qutb, on the other hand, delineates apostasy into two forms: one in which an individual gives allegiance and leadership to non-believers, and another where one abandons the direct worship of Allah. Qutb reinforces his

argument with the concept that if God is one (*uluhiyyah wahidah*), then there must be one true religion (*dainunah wahidah*), leaving no room for any alternative religious path.

When considering the additional criteria for comparison, the theological approaches of these two tafsirs differ notably. Zamakhshari's interpretation is deeply rooted in the Mu'tazilite tradition, emphasizing rationality, purity of faith, and strict adherence to divine law. His approach is more linguistic and philosophical, reflecting the intellectual milieu of 12th-century Islamic civilization. On the other hand, Sayyid Qutb's work is shaped by the socio-political context of 20th-century Egypt, where he confronts secularism, colonial influences, and internal social strife. His interpretation is more ideologically charged and seeks to mobilize a contemporary Islamic consciousness by stressing the exclusivity and practical implementation of Islamic law.

Culturally, Zamakhshari's tafsir is characterized by its emphasis on the elegance and rhetorical power of classical Arabic, employing refined linguistic analysis to illuminate the text's meaning. In contrast, Qutb's language is more direct and activist in tone, reflecting a cultural context that demands not only intellectual engagement but also socio-political transformation.

Historically, the background of Tafsir al-Kashshāf is situated in a period of relative political stability and intellectual flourishing in the medieval Islamic world, where scholarly debate focused on reconciling reason with revelation. In contrast, *Fi Zilāl al-Qur'ān* emerged in a time of political upheaval and ideological contestation, with Qutb's work serving as a response to modern challenges such as secularism and imperialism.

In summary, while both Tafsir al-Kashshāf and *Fi Zilāl al-Qur'ān* converge on the central tenet that Islam is the only true and divinely sanctioned religion, they differ in their emphases. Zamakhshari presents a rational and linguistic argument for the exclusivity of Islam, insisting that only pure, unadulterated faith leads to salvation. In contrast, Qutb's interpretation is driven by a socio-political urgency that underscores the necessity of adhering to Islamic law as the singular source of divine truth in the modern world. These differences not only reflect their distinct

theological and intellectual traditions but also the divergent historical and cultural contexts in which they wrote. This comparative analysis thereby illuminates the multifaceted nature of the Qur'anic concept of pluralism as interpreted by two of its most influential commentators.