

# Education of Religious Harmony in Surah At-Tin: A Study of Al-Qasimi's Thought

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## ABSTRACT

This article examines the hints of religious harmony in Surah At-Tin through a thematic interpretation approach to the classic tafsir work Mahasin At-Ta'wil by Jamaluddin Al-Qasimi. In his tafsir, Al-Qasimi not only focuses on theological aspects, but also emphasizes universal human values and justice. These values become a relevant foundation in building interfaith harmony in a multicultural society. This study found that Al-Qasimi interpreted this letter as a form of respect for humans as noble and morally responsible creatures, as well as a call to uphold justice without discrimination on the basis of religious beliefs.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Inter-religious harmony is very important in a plural society. The theological foundation of tolerance and interreligious harmony is very important in the context of Indonesia, which prioritizes diversity. Scholars have formulated many theories regarding religious tolerance and interfaith harmony[1]. As a religion that is *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, Islam has provided moral and spiritual foundations that can be used to realize a peaceful life among different people [2]. According to the study, the Medina Charter and other accounts of the Prophet Muhammad's dealings with the Jewish and Christian communities also reflect the hadith's teachings on respecting and protecting non-Muslims, particularly in social and legal circumstances. The Christian Gospel, on the other hand, places a strong

focus on the teaching of universal love and does not distinguish how people should treat one another depending on their theological background. While their normative frameworks differ, the two texts share a shared understanding of morality and social ethics [3].

For this reason, a theological concept and formulation of inter-religious relations is needed from the primary source of Islamic teachings itself and one of the parts of the Qur'an that implicitly contains these values is Surah At-Tin. This is a form of functioning the Qur'an as a *hudan* or *way of life* with down-to-earth values that are not only at the level of ideality without being able to be practiced [4].

Surah At-Tin consists of eight verses that are included in the category of short letters where most Muslims know and often perform them, both in daily spiritual worship

such as prayer and others. Not even a few Muslim children are able to memorize it. This surah at least explicitly uses symbols of the prophetic treatises (Isa, Musa, and Muhammad). The verses in this surah show more clearly the places where the three prophets were born or received their prophetic duties. Indeed, the three prophets are often mentioned together, for example, in Surah Ash-Shaff: 5-6 [5]. It also emphasizes the moral responsibility of man and his nobility [5].

Tafsir *Mahasin At-Ta'wil* by Jamaluddin Al-Qasimi offers an interesting way to understand the deep meanings contained in this surah. Jamaluddin Al-Qasimi was a reformist scholar who lived from 1866 to 1914 [6]. He is known for his interpretations that use rational methods. Al-Qasimi combined linguistic, thematic, and social approaches to interpret the Qur'an in *Mahasin At-Ta'wil* [7]. He emphasized that understanding the social context and universal principles in tafsir is very important. Thus, his tafsir contains great potential in explaining the principles of a just and harmonious social life, including inter-religious relations

Thus, this study aims to explore in depth the interpretation of Surah At-Tin in *Mahasin At-Ta'wil* and analyze the construction of Jamaluddin Al-Qasimi's thoughts related to the values of interfaith harmony contained in his tafsir. The focus of this study lies not only on the linguistic meaning of the verse, but also on the social and ethical dimensions offered by Al-Qasimi in building a harmonious life in a pluralistic society.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Get to Know the Figure of Jamaludin Al-Qasimi

His full name is Al-Allamah al-Muhaddith Syria, Muhammad Jamaluddin Abu Faraj bin Muhammad Sa'id bin Qasim bin Shalih Ibn Ismail bin Abu Bakar [8]. He is attributed to his grandfather named Sheikh Qasim a leading scholar in the Levant. He was born on Monday of Jumada U'la in 1283

AH/1866 AD in Damascus and died on Saturday of Jumada U'la in 1332 AH/1914 AD.[9]

He grew up in a family renowned for loyalty and knowledge. Al-Qasimi's father, also known as Abu 'Abdillah Muhammad Sa'id Abi al-Khair, was a jurist and a writer. His father inherited a library containing a lot of scientific literature from his grandfather. In addition, his father passed on various knowledge to al-Qasimi directly from the source, namely books. The personal library of al-Qasimi's father contained many books on various topics, including tafsir, hadith, jurisprudence, languages, Sufism, literature, history, usul fiqh, sports, comparative law, philosophy, and the history of comparative religions.

Muhammad Abduh was the one who influenced his intellectual progress the most. Since his acquaintance with Muhammad Abduh in 1904, he wrote more in prose style than the rhyme style he had long practiced. In addition, he included those who opposed taklid and called for ijthad to be opened [4].

Among Imam Al-Qasimi's teachers were [10]:

- 1) Sheikh Abdurahman Al-Mishri, from whom he learned to read the Qur'an.
- 2) Sheikh Rashid, from whom Al-Qasimi learned Tawheed, Shorof, Nahwu, Mantiq, Arudh at the Dhahiriyah Madrasah.
- 3) Sheikh Ahmad Al-Haulaniy, from whom Al-Qasimi learned the science of Qira'at
- 4) Sheikh Salim Al-Athar, from whom Al-Qasimi learned Tafsir *Al-Baidhawiy*, *Jam'ul Jawami*, *Murwattha*, *Mashabihu Sunnah*, *Jami'Ash-Shagir* and others.

As a writer, he was known to be productive and spent a lot of time in his life to produce various written works [11]. There are at least 100 titles of written works that he has produced [6]. While in other records mentioned there are 72 works, and according to Harahap there are 119 works owned by Al-

Qasimi Among his monumental works are [12], [13], [14]:

- 1) Dalaail At-Tauhid.
- 2) Diiwaan Khithab.
- 3) Al-Fatawaa fil Islaam.
- 4) Irsyaad Al-Khalqi ilal'Amali bil Barqi.
- 5) Mahasin At-Ta'wil
- 6) Qawaa'id At-Ta'hdits min Fununi Mushthalah Al-Hadith.
- 7) Naqd An-Nashaih Al-Kafiyah.

#### **Overview of Mahsin Ta'wil Book**

The entire the tafsir *Mahasin At-Ta'wil* was written during a time of conflict between two cultures. In the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century, there was a constant clash between Islam and the international movements of orientalism and missionaryism. At this time, the infidel colonialist attack on the Islamic world reached its peak [15]. He became a prominent voice in the struggle against stagnation in Muslim societies and for the revival of Islamic philosophy after being born in Damascus, Syria [16]. Under such conditions, Al-Qasimi became one of the important scholars of his time, who was born and lived in a geographical area under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, which is one of the important commentaries written in the early 20th century [17].

The reason Al-Qasimi composed the book of tafsir is because he felt that the science of tafsir is the highest science of all branches of religious science, as he said in the Muqaddimah of his tafsir;

*Amma ba'du, the most noble of goals, and the most excellent of what people seek, is knowledge that revives the heart and nourishes the mind, and the most excellent of all kinds of knowledge, and the most perfect of teachers, and the most beneficial of all, is the knowledge of sharee'ah and religious knowledge. Both of these are beneficial to the slave and will benefit him in the future. As for the science of tafseer, among these sciences, it is the highest in status, the strongest in evidence, the most solid in construction, and the clearest in explanation [10].*

In addition, Muhammad Bahjat Al-Baithar, a member of *Majma' Al-'Ilmi Al-'Arabi*, was involved in helping to publish Al-

Qasimi's tafsir, which was first published in Cairo by *Dar Ihya' Al-Kutub Al-'Arabiyah*. The commentary of *Mahasin At-Ta'wil* is accessible thanks to this effort.

If you read Al-Qasimi's work, you will find the sources of interpretation in *Mahasin At-Ta'wil*: *First*, the verses of the Qur'an itself. *Second*, the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. In this case, al-Qasimi took many traditions from the books of hadith written by al-Bukhari, Muslim, at-Tirmizi, Ahmad bin Hanbal, Malik bin Anas, Ibn Hibban, and others. *Third*, the words and opinions of the companions, such as Abu Bakr, Umar b. al-Khattab and Ali b. Abi Talib. *Fourth*, the power of *ra'yu* in capturing the meaning of the Qur'an. Al-Qasimi in interpreting the verse of the Qur'an always interpreted it based on several pieces of sentences or words. *Fifth*, Al-Qasimi also often quoted some of the interpretations of scholars before him, such as; Imam At-Thabari in *Jami' Al-Bayan Fi Ayyi Ta'wil Al-Qur'an*, Al-Hafizh Ibn Katsir in *Tafsir al-Qur'an Al-Azhim*, Az-Zamakhshari in *Al-Kasyaf*.

In addition, he often quoted the opinions of previous scholars to support the interpretation or expand the discussion. Among the scholars who were often referenced by Al-Qasimi were Ibn Taymiyah, Izzudin bin Abd As-Salam, Ash-Shaykh Waliyullah Ad-Dahlawi, Abu Amru Ad-Dani, Abu Ubaid Al-Qasim bin Salam, Ash-Shafi'i, Ibn Sa'd, Al-Farra', Al-Qadi Abddul Jabbar, Ash-Syahrastani, Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani, Ibn Qayim, As-Suyuti, and Ibn Hazm.

In addition, to strengthen the argumentation of scientific views in the book of tafsir, Al-Qasimi often quotes the views and opinions of modern scientists who are contemporaries. Some of these sources make the book of interpretation by Al-Qasimi into a book of interpretation that is very rich with scientific treasures [18].

If you look at the division of interpretation styles above, tafsir *Mahasin At-Ta'wil* can be included in the category of tafsir *bil-ra'yu* and *'ilmi*. Because Imam Qasimi interpreted many verses based on reason, although he quoted many hadiths and

opinions of the companions. But *Al-Ra'yu* is more dominant in this Tafsir than *Al-Ma'tsur*. Then the style of *ilmi*, because Al-Qasimi was much influenced by scientific tendencies [12]. of tafsir, he deliberately explained in detail the problems of astronomy contained in the Qur'an. He also explained that he quoted many opinions of astronomy experts to strengthen his explanation [15]. Although according to [7] Al-Qasimi's work is more likely to have *Al-Ijtima'i* nuances.

In writing his tafsir book, al-Qasimi uses *mushafi* systematics, which is based on the order of the Qur'an. He interpreted the Qur'an starting from Surah Al-Fatihah and ending with Surah An-Nas. This systematic is widely used by the mufasir in writing the book of tafsir. In interpreting a verse, Al-Qasimi reveals the verse to be interpreted with the following steps;

- 1) Provides an overview in terms of language.
- 2) Reveal arguments to support the interpretation derived from the Prophet's hadith, the opinions of the Companions, and the opinions of some scholars.
- 3) Providing scientific elaboration of the kauniyah verses.
- 4) Al-Qasimi often provides *Tanbih*, *Fawaid*, *Fashl* at the end of the interpretation to add to the explanation.
- 5) At the beginning of the interpretation of a surah, Al-Qasimi gives the names of the surah, the place of its revelation, and the merits of the surah.

### 3. METHODS

This research is a qualitative study based on *library research* using thematic interpretation approach (*tafsir maudhuii*) and *content analysis* method. The thematic interpretation approach was chosen because it is able to examine one particular theme in the Qur'an comprehensively by collecting relevant verses, as well as tracing the interpretations of the mufasirs on the theme in a particular context [19]. In this case, the focus

is directed at the theme of interfaith harmony as reflected in the interpretation of Surah At-Tin by Jamaluddin Al-Qasimi in his tafsir *Mahasin At-Ta'wil*.

The primary data source in this research is the complete text of tafsir Mahasin At-Ta'wil, while secondary data includes supporting literature such as tafsir books, reputable journal articles, and other scientific publications relevant to the theme of tolerance, pluralism, and Al-Qasimi's tafsir thought. The analysis technique is carried out by deeply examining the meaning construction built by Al-Qasimi on Surah At-Tin, identifying the representation of human values, justice, and interfaith tolerance, and assessing its relevance in the socio-religious context of pluralistic Indonesia. This method is in line with the content analysis framework that aims to reveal implicit and explicit messages in the text, and assess its applicability in the contemporary context.

With this approach, the research is expected to be able to systematically explore the contribution of Al-Qasimi's tafsir thought in mainstreaming the values of interfaith harmony, as well as enriching the discourse of social-humanitarian tafsir in the treasure of Islamic scholarship.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Interpretation of Surah At-Tin

In interpreting Surah At-Tin, Al-Qasimi begins by mentioning that this surah belongs to the class of Makkiyah surahs, but there are those who say it is a Madaniyah surah, and its verses total eight verses. Then he mentioned a hadith narrated by Al-Bara' bin 'Azib: *that the prophet s.a.w recited on a journey in one of the two rak'ahs with Surah At-Tin, and I did not hear anyone who was better in voice or recitation*". (narrated by the jama'ah) [8].

وَالْتِّينَ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَطُورِ سِينِينَ وَهَذَا الْبَلَدِ الْأَمِينِ

Al-Qasimi explained that the mufassirin did not differ in their understanding that the safe country in this Surah is Makkah, which is honored and its people are safe from war, as Allah says;

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا آمِنًا وَيُحِطُّفُ النَّاسُ مِنْ حَوْلِهِمْ

"Have they not considered that We have made their land a safe and holy land, while the people around it rob each other?" (Q.S al 'Ankabut: 67).

Imam Mujahid and al-Hasan and others said that (التين) that which is edible and (الزيتون) that which can be processed. They said that these two are singled out because they have many benefits and are of great benefit. Qatadah said that (التين) is a mountain in Damascus, and (الزيتون) is the one on top of which is Bayt al-Maqdis. There is also an opinion that they are the names of two familiar trees, or two mountains or two mosques. And Ibn Jarir confirmed the first opinion, which is the edible tin fruit and olives from which can be processed into oil, because that is what the Arabs know, and they do not recognize the existence of a mountain named tin or olive [8].

Ibn Kathir said: Some of the Imams said, this indicates the place where Allah sent a prophet and messenger from the *ulul azmi*, and the first place of the tin and olive trees is baitul maqdis where the prophet Isa a.s was sent. Secondly, the hill of Sinai, which is the hill where Allah spoke with the prophet Moses. Then Ibn Taymiyyah said: this surah swears by the two beginning and great places where there is light and guidance, and in which three books were revealed, namely the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an [8].

Al-Qasimi continued that it appears that some modern thinkers say that the word Allah; (التين) is the bodhi tree underlying Buddhism, which has undergone many changes from its original form. This is because the teachings of Buddhism were not yet written down in his time, and were only narrated as well as utterances by oral transmission. Later on it was written down by its followers. And the more correct view, if we are correct in our interpretation of this verse, is that he was a true prophet called Sakyamni or Gautama, who at the beginning meditated on a large tin tree under which revelation came down to him, and he was sent as an apostle. Satan tried many times to deceive him, but was unable. The Bodhi tree became a sacred tree in Buddhist belief, which they also called Acapala

In this verse Allah mentions the four greatest religions of mankind that were revealed with their guidance and benefit in their religion and world. And the oath in this verse is a tamhid for the verse that follows لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ.

And there is no doubt that the adherents of these four religions are the most noble leaders on earth, the most numerous. And in the order in which they are mentioned in this verse, Allah starts swearing by Buddhism because it is the least true religion and is the most corrupt due to its many changes from its original form. As is the case when people make oaths, they start with the lesser things and increase to the greater things. Then Christianity, which has undergone fewer changes than Buddhism. Then Judaism, which is more correct than Christianity, and then Islam, which is more correct than all of them and is far from being altered and changed from its original form. However, the sources of these religions cannot be separated from change absolutely, whether it is the book, the practice mutawattir sunnah.

The mention of the order of these religions, which begins with the main Buddhist religion, then the just Jewish religion, is a sign that teaches us to be forgiving first to our fellow human beings, and then the harsh and just teaching. That is why Islam begins with gentleness and forgiveness, then harshness and punishment.

Regarding the prophethood of Sidharta Gautama, some researchers have concluded that he was the prophet Dzulkifli who is referred to in the Qur'an as a patient man. The word Dzulkifli means a person from kifl, which is what the Arabs call Kafila or Kapilavastu, the place where Buddha was born. This is as mentioned by Hamka<sup>(1989)</sup> in *Tafsir Al-Azhar* by quoting the opinion of Shaykh Ahmad Soorkati who suspects that Buddha is the same figure as the prophet Dzulkifli.

Regarding Al-Qasimi's interpretation of Tin as a Bodhi tree and Buddhist prophethood, criticized by Hamka, according to him this opinion is a less thorough thought

because of the lack of knowledge about Buddhism itself. Because according to him, Buddha and his teachings talk more about life and philosophy of life, and never discuss the article of divinity and its surroundings [20].

M. Quraish Shihab in *Tafsir Al-Misbah* commented on Al-Qasimi's opinion that if this opinion is accepted, it can be said that the oath in the first to third verses where Allah swears by the places where the prophets received divine commands, namely the prophets with religions that have large numbers of followers today, namely Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism.

This is one of the consequences of interpreting verse 164 of Surah An-Nisa' as follows:

وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنَاهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَرُسُلًا لَمْ نَقْصُصْنَاهُمْ عَلَيْكَ  
وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا

"And there are some messengers of whom we have narrated to you before, and there are some messengers of whom we have not narrated to you. And to Moses, Allah spoke directly". (QS. An Nisa':164)

Imam Al-Qasimi interpreted "there are some messengers whom we have narrated to you" to mean in the Makkiyah surahs, and "and there are some messengers (others) whom we did not narrate to you" to mean that we did not mention them to you in the Qur'an. Some of the mutaqqaddimin scholars counted the prophets of the Jews and Christians and found that there were no more than 50 of them. Their number was also narrated in several sanads. Among them is the hadeeth of Abu Dhar, authenticated by Ibn Hibban: "Indeed, there are 124,000 prophets, and the number of messengers is 313." [8].

Thus, according to Al-Qasimi, Buddha was a Prophet even though he is not included in the group of 25 Prophets whose names are clearly and definitely mentioned in the Qur'an. Therefore, every Muslim should recognize Buddha's prophethood and believe that there are many other Prophets whose names are not mentioned in the Qur'an [21].

#### 4.2 Cue Interfaith Harmony

The first verse of the oath is interpreted by Al-Qasimi as representing the holy places associated with the prophets *At-Tin* is the bodhi tree from which Buddhism

began and *Az-Zaitun* speaks of Palestine, where Prophet Isa lived. *Thur Sinin* is the name of Mount Sinai, where Prophet Moses received his revelation. *Balad Al-Amin* speaks of Mecca, the home of Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, Al-Qasimi sees that the treatises of the prophets have a unity that emphasizes universal values [22].

Al-Qasimi's interpretation of the word *At-Tin* with the bodhi tree is the beginning of Buddhism, and dared to state that Sidharta Gautama as a prophet who also received revelation from God and received the task of the message. Although not free from criticism, Al-Qasimi's thought can be understood as a step that seeks to bring various religious teachings closer to a common point. Where although there are various differences between one religious teaching with other religious teachings, but Al-Qasimi wants to remind that basically these teachings have the same roots. With his thoughts, Al-Qasimi wanted to emphasize the recognition of the message of the prophets as the basis for the unity of mankind.

Al-Qasimi's thinking is interesting, where in Surah At-Tin it confirms that Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism were originally teachings brought by the prophets and messengers of Allah, although some of them are told in the Qur'an and others are not told. In its journey, the teachings of Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism experienced distortions and changes in some of the teachings and concepts of worship and belief. But in the context of religious harmony, from Al-Qasimi's thought it is understood that the differences that exist should not reduce the value and awareness that there is a point of similarity in its origin. Then if Al-Qasimi's logic related to the concept of Buddhist prophethood continues, it does not rule out the possibility that influential figures in the world both with good thoughts and teachings also include prophets who are not told [23].

## 5. CONCLUSION

*Tafsir Mahasin At-Ta'wil* on Surah At-Tin by Jamaluddin Al-Qasimi contains

important signs about religious harmony. Al-Qasimi emphasizes the importance of the unity of the message of the prophets and opens the possibility of various good teachings that develop in the world community is derived from the teachings of the prophets who are not told in the Qur'an. With the awareness of the unity of the message, there will be awareness of the same source, although in its development there are

various changes that cause differences. In the context of a pluralistic Indonesian society, this interpretation provides a normative basis for building harmonious relations between religious communities. This interpretation shows that Islam, as understood by reformist thinkers such as Al-Qasimi, is a religion that places human values above sectarianism.

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