

Hermeneutics of Religious Freedom in Modern and Contemporary Interpretation: A Comparative Analysis between Tafsir al-Manar and Fazlur Rahman

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Abstract

In response to the global challenges of rising intolerance and the politicization of religion, this study explores the hermeneutics of religious freedom in Islam through a comparative analysis of *Tafsir al-Manar* and Fazlur Rahman's double movement methodology. Employing a qualitative comparative design grounded in philosophical hermeneutics, the research analyzes primary texts of *Tafsir al-Manar* and Rahman's key works, supported by recent secondary literature. The findings indicate that *al-Manar* adopts a rational-contextualist approach that prioritizes communal protection against colonial-era religious coercion, whereas Rahman articulates universal ethical principles centered on freedom of conscience, resonating with contemporary human rights discourse. This study proposes an integrative hermeneutical model that synthesizes historical consciousness with universal ethics, enabling QS. *Al-Baqarah* (2:256) to be interpreted both as a safeguard against forced conversion and as a timeless affirmation of religious freedom. The proposed model offers practical implications for policy development, particularly in the areas of religious freedom advocacy, interfaith dialogue, and inclusive Islamic educational curricula. This research contributes to Qur'anic hermeneutics by bridging traditional exegesis and modern ethical concerns, offering a framework that is both contextually grounded and normatively responsive to pluralistic Muslim societies.

Keywords: Religious freedom, *Tafsir al-Manar*, Fazlur Rahman, Qur'anic hermeneutics, pluralism

Abstrak

Sebagai respons terhadap meningkatnya tantangan global berupa intoleransi dan politisasi agama, penelitian ini mengkaji hermeneutika kebebasan beragama dalam Islam melalui analisis komparatif antara *Tafsir al-Manar* dan pendekatan *double movement* Fazlur Rahman. Dengan menggunakan desain kualitatif komparatif yang berakar pada fondasi hermeneutika filosofis, studi ini menganalisis teks primer *Tafsir al-Manar* dan karya utama Rahman, didukung literatur sekunder terkini. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa *al-Manar* menerapkan metode rasional-kontekstual yang menekankan perlindungan komunitas Muslim dari tekanan keagamaan kolonial, sedangkan Rahman menegaskan prinsip etika universal kebebasan berkeyakinan yang selaras dengan wacana hak asasi manusia kontemporer. Studi ini mengusulkan model hermeneutika integratif yang memadukan kesadaran historis dan etika universal, sehingga QS. *Al-Baqarah*:256 dapat ditafsirkan baik sebagai larangan terhadap pemaksaan beragama maupun sebagai afirmasi universal atas kebebasan beragama. Model ini

memberikan kontribusi praktis bagi pengembangan kebijakan, advokasi kebebasan beragama, penguatan dialog antariman, dan pengembangan kurikulum pendidikan Islam yang inklusif. Penelitian ini memperkaya wacana hermeneutika Al-Qur'an dengan menjembatani tradisi dan modernitas, serta menawarkan kerangka etis-responsif yang relevan dalam menghadapi tantangan pluralisme masyarakat Muslim kontemporer.

Kata kunci: Kebebasan beragama, Tafsir al-Manar, Fazlur Rahman, Hermeneutika Qur'an, Pluralisme.

INTRODUCTION

In the midst of growing intolerance and global religious conflicts, the principle of religious freedom in Islam has come under critical scrutiny. Although the Qur'an explicitly prohibits religious coercion (*lā ikrāha fī al-dīn*), the interpretations of sacred texts are frequently politicized to justify discrimination. In Indonesia, for example, the rejection of minority houses of worship and the marginalization of non-mainstream Muslim groups reflect how literalist interpretations continue to dominate, despite incongruity with the realities of multicultural societies. Similarly, in some Muslim-majority countries such as Egypt, verses on religious freedom are sometimes invoked to critique discrimination against religious minorities such as Shia Muslims and Coptic Christians, yet exclusive identity politics often obstruct consistent implementation.¹

This phenomenon underscores the extent to which Qur'anic interpretation is deeply entangled with ideological interests and power structures, thus requiring hermeneutical approaches capable of reconciling textual authenticity with universal ethics.² The rise of global secularism further intensifies the demand for progressive reinterpretations that can address modern religious pluralism, creating tensions between conservative and contextual-progressive readings that threaten social cohesion. In this context, contemporary philosophical hermeneutics, particularly Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Horizontverschmelzung* (fusion of horizons) and Paul Ricoeur's dialectic of *distanciation* and *appropriation*, offer a critical framework to integrate the historicity of sacred texts with the ethical imperatives of pluralistic societies.³

The discourse of religious freedom in a multicultural society demands a reinterpretation of religious texts, because interreligious interactions often raise the issue of interpretation of normative doctrines that come into contact with the rights of minorities. One of the verses that is often

¹ Syafiq Hasyim, "State and Religion: Considering Indonesian Islam as Model of Democratisation for the Muslim World," *Colloquium on Models of Secularism*, 2013, 22–25, https://edoc.vifapol.de/opus/volltexte/2015/5692/pdf/State_and_Religion.PDF.

² Laure Guirguis, *Copts and the Security State: Violence, Coercion, and Sectarianism in Contemporary Egypt* (Stanford University Press Stanford, California, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503600805>.

³ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd editio (London: Continuum, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472546304>.

debated is QS. al-Baqarah:256 ("...*lā ikrāha fī al-dīn*"), which supposedly guarantees freedom of belief, but in practice is often twisted by certain groups to justify discrimination against minorities. This shows that the meaning of the text is not final, but rather open to dialogue between the text and the context of the reader. As emphasized by Siregar and Harahap (2025), the contextual hermeneutic approach in Abdullah Saeed's tradition of thought positions the text as a dynamic entity that must be read dialogically with socio-historical conditions, so that the values of religious freedom are more applicable in the context of modern society.⁴

Although interfaith dialogue has been initiated as a solution to religious-based conflicts, this approach has limitations if it is not accompanied by a hermeneutic reading of normative verses such as QS. al-Baqarah:256. Academic criticism highlights that religious dialogue is often elitist, disconnected from grassroots realities, and fails to address internal issues such as intra-religious conflicts or sectarian tensions.⁵ In addition, formal approaches tend to ignore the dynamics of interpretation, which is the source of justification for exclusivism. Therefore, interpretive analysis and robust methodologies of interpretation are essential for deconstructing the underlying structures of meaning embedded in religious discourse.

The hermeneutics of the Qur'an has undergone a significant methodological transformation, shifting from traditional linguistically based approaches (*tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr*) to more contextual and sociological analyses.⁶ *Tafsīr al-Manar*, authored by Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida, pioneered modern Qur'anic interpretation by integrating rationalist thought with anti-colonial concerns, through their application of the principle of *maṣlaḥah* (public interest) to socio-political issues. Fazlur Rahman introduced the *double movement* method, which emphasizes contextualization of the universal principles of the text to contemporary issues such as human rights and pluralism.⁷ Yet, most existing scholarship still treats these approaches separately. *Al-Manar* is typically regarded as representative of early Islamic modernism, while Rahman is viewed as a key figure in contemporary Islamic hermeneutics, without sufficiently exploring the dialectical relationship between their methodologies.

⁴ A L M Siregar and A R Z Harahap, "Contextual Hermeneutic Analysis in the Interpretation of the Qur'an: A Study on the Methodology of Abdullah Saeed," *Tashdiq: Journal of Religious Studies* 5, no. 1 (2025), <https://ejournal.cahayaimubangsa.institute/index.php/tashdiq/article/view/1344>.

⁵ A P O Arifin, M B Rahmat, and M Tauhid, "Religious Harmony: The Perspective of the Tafsir of Al-Azhar by Buya Hamka," in *UInScof Conference Proceedings*, 2024.

⁶ Sanusi Lafiagi Haruna, "Contemporary Approaches to Qur'anic Hermeneutics" 8, no. 2 (2024): 315–317.

⁷ Muh. Yusuf Rahim, "Pemikiran Tafsir Fazlur Rahman (Terhadap Ayat-Ayat Hukum Dan Sosial)," *Skripsi*, 2022, 26.

Although some scholarship has examined *al-Manar* and Rahman separately, there remains a lack of comparative studies that systematically analyze their socio-historical foundations and methodological evolution. The dominant literature tends to treat *al-Manar* as a representation of 19th-century modernism and Rahman as an icon of contemporary hermeneutics, without adequately highlighting the dialectical relationship between the two. *Al-Manar* established the foundation for criticism of interpretive hegemony, while Rahman extended it to the realm of global application.⁸ Previous research has also neglected a socio-historical analysis of the contexts that shaped these methods, thus failing to explain how the evolution of Qur'anic hermeneutics has responded to shifting historical and intellectual conditions. For example, Muhammad Daffa (2022) describes *Tafsir al-Manar* as a response to colonial dominance but stops short of conducting an intertextual analysis related to pluralism.⁹ Hamdan (2020) applies Schleiermacher's hermeneutics to the philosophy of unbelief in the Qur'an through Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, but does not address religious freedom.¹⁰ Fahrurrozi applies Fazlur Rahman's method of double movement structurally through the verses of the caliphate, but has not juxtaposed this approach with modern interpretations such as *al-Manar* in the context of a single verse.¹¹ Hasanah and Syafieh relate Rahman's method to tolerance in Islam, but without constructing a new hermeneutic synthesis.¹² Arisdiyanto's work focuses on pluralism in hadith without entering the field of Qur'anic exegesis.¹³ These gaps underscore the originality and relevance of a study that explicitly compares both *al-Manar* and Rahman in the context of QS. al-Baqarah:256.

This study seeks to fill that gap by adopting an integrative hermeneutic framework, not only comparing their methodologies and proposing a synthesis that addresses the ethical, sociopolitical, and educational dimensions of Qur'anic interpretation. Such a comprehensive approach is particularly relevant in pluralistic Muslim societies, where tensions between religious authority, minority rights, and interfaith coexistence remain pressing challenges that require both textual fidelity and ethical responsiveness.

⁸ Haruna, "Contemporary Approaches to Qur'anic Hermeneutics."

⁹ Muhammad Daffa, Thesis: "Expert of the Book in the Qur'an (Perspective of Muhammad Rashid Ridha in *Tafsir Al-Manar*)" (PTIQ Jakarta, 2022), <https://repository.ptiq.ac.id/id/eprint/738>.

¹⁰ M Hamdan, "The Philosophy of the Infidels in the Qur'an: Schleiermacher's Hermeneutic Analysis," *Tashwirul Afkar* Vol. 38, No. 02 (2020): 285, <https://www.academia.edu/68449729>.

¹¹ Fahrurrozi, Thesis: "Implementation of the Double Movement Hermeneutics Method in Interpreting the Verses of the Caliphate (Study of Fazlur Rahman's Thought)" (UIN Mataram, 2022), <https://etheses.uinmataram.ac.id/4290>.

¹² N Hasanah and S Syafieh, "Tracing Religious Tolerance in the Qur'an: An Analysis of Fazlur Rahman's Double Movement Method," *At-Taisir: Journal of Qur'an Science and Tafsir* 5, no. 1 (2024): 57, <https://jurnal.idaqu.ac.id/index.php/at-taisir/article/view/323>.

¹³ Fikri Arisdiyanto, Thesis: "Pluralism and Religious Tolerance: An Interpretive Hermeneutic Study of the Essence of Religion in the Hadith Narrated by Al-Bukhari No. 1311" (UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2022).

This research aims to make a significant contribution to the study of Qur'anic interpretation and hermeneutics, with a particular focus on the issue of religious freedom. The objectives are threefold: (1) to analyze the methodological differences between *Tafsir al-Manar* (representing modernist exegesis) and Fazlur Rahman's contemporary hermeneutics in addressing the concept of religious freedom; (2) to evaluate the relevance of both approaches in responding to the challenges of religious pluralism in the era of globalization, particularly in terms of their potential to foster interfaith dialogue and promote tolerance within diverse religious landscapes; and (3) to propose an integrative model that combines the contextual rationality of *al-Manar* with the universal ethical principles articulated in Rahman's framework. As a case study, this research will examine the interpretation of QS. al-Baqarah (2:256), *lā ikrāha fī al-dīn* ("There is no compulsion in religion"), through both methods to illustrate how the same text can yield different meanings depending on the interpretive paradigm of its time. In doing so, this study aims to address a gap in the literature on the evolution of Qur'anic hermeneutics and offer an adaptive interpretive model for addressing contemporary socio-religious issues.

The central hypothesis of this study posits that integrating the rationalist methodology of *Tafsir al-Manar* with Fazlur Rahman's contextualist approach will produce a holistic hermeneutical model. Such a model is expected not only to respect the historical context of the Qur'anic text but also to incorporate universal values such as human rights and social justice. This argument rests on the premise that *Tafsir al-Manar* offers a critical lens for challenging exclusive interpretations that overlook socio-cultural realities, while Rahman's double movement method provides a pathway for applying Qur'anic principles to contemporary global concerns. For instance, in interpreting QS. *al-Baqarah* (2:256), *al-Manar* emphasizes resistance to colonial hegemony, reflecting the political and historical context of early 20th-century Muslim societies.¹⁴ In contrast, Rahman's interpretation foregrounds the protection of religious freedom as a universal human right.¹⁵ The synthesis of these perspectives is expected to bridge the divide between traditionalism and radical modernism, ultimately contributing to stronger social cohesion within pluralistic societies.

METHODS

The material object of this research is the hermeneutics of religious freedom as articulated in *Tafsir al-Manar* and the works of Fazlur Rahman. The unit of analysis centers on two primary sources: (1) *Tafsir al-Manar* (Volumes 3–5) by Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida, and (2) Fazlur Rahman's

¹⁴ Andi Abdul Hamzah2 Muh. Salam1, "Tafsir Kebebasan Beragama dalam Surah Al Baqarah Ayat 62: Suatu Analisis Kritis Terhadap Tafsir Al-Manār," *Tafsir* 10, no. 01 (2022): 274.

¹⁵ Fazlur Rahman, *Islam & Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1982). 6

Islam and Modernity (1982) and *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (1989). These texts were selected for their representative value in modern (*al-Manar*) and contemporary (Rahman) Qur'anic hermeneutics, both of which explicitly engage with the issue of religious freedom. Selection criteria included thematic relevance, availability of primary data, and scholarly recognition as authoritative references. *Tafsir al-Manar* was chosen for its critical engagement with colonialism, while Rahman was selected for his pioneering development of the double movement hermeneutic, which aligns with modern human rights discourse.

This study employs a comparative qualitative design grounded in philosophical hermeneutics. This design facilitates a systematic comparison of methods, historical contexts, and interpretive implications between *al-Manar* and Rahman, while identifying evolutionary patterns within Qur'anic hermeneutics. The process involves three stages: (1) descriptive analysis of each interpretation, (2) comparative evaluation across criteria such as historical contextualization and universal ethical principles, and (3) critical assessment of the strengths and limitations of each approach. This framework enables an in-depth analysis of text-context interactions while mapping each method's contribution to the discourse on religious freedom.

Philosophically, this study is anchored in the hermeneutic thought of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur. Gadamer's *fusion of horizons* (*Horizontverschmelzung*) frames the integration of historical awareness with ethical universality, allowing for dialogical engagement between *al-Manar*'s contextual rationalism and Rahman's universal principles. Ricoeur's notions of *distanciation* and *appropriation* guide critical reinterpretation of Qur'anic verses such as QS. Al-Baqarah:256, enabling the text to maintain its normative authority while remaining responsive to contemporary challenges.¹⁶

Primary sources include the original Arabic edition of *Tafsir al-Manar* and Rahman's English-language texts. Secondary sources consist of peer-reviewed journal articles, particularly from high-impact outlets such as *Religions* (Q1 Scopus) and the *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, that critically examine the methodologies of both figures. Primary sources were selected for their authenticity and proximity to the interpretive context, while secondary sources were filtered based on relevance, Scopus indexation, and recency (2020–2025) to ensure up-to-date scholarly engagement. Literature searches were conducted via databases such as JSTOR and Google Scholar using keywords including “Tafsir al-Manar hermeneutics” and “Fazlur Rahman double movement.”

¹⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976). 29-34

The principal data collection techniques involve document analysis and critical literature review. Document analysis centers on tracing interpretations of verses related to religious freedom (e.g., QS. Al-Baqarah:256) in both *Tafsir al-Manar* and Rahman's works, supplemented by the inclusion of direct quotations (verbatim) from primary texts to preserve interpretive context. The literature review identifies patterns in existing research relevant to both approaches. This methodology allows for a comprehensive exploration of textual meanings and interpretive frameworks while minimizing subjectivity and avoiding interview bias. The process proceeds through: (1) data collection, (2) thematic categorization (e.g., rationalism, contextualization), and (3) cross-validation against secondary literature to ensure analytical rigor.

Data analysis follows thematic analysis and constant comparative methods. Thematic analysis identifies recurring patterns such as "colonial context" in *al-Manar* and "human rights" in Rahman, while comparative analysis maps similarities and divergences between both methods. The process includes: (1) coding primary data with labels (e.g., "rationalism," "universalism"), (2) grouping codes into broader themes (e.g., responses to modernity), and (3) interpretive synthesis guided by Ricoeur's hermeneutic framework. Data validity is strengthened through triangulation between primary and secondary sources, as well as peer debriefing with scholars in Islamic studies. NVivo 12 software is employed to organize data and visualize thematic relationships.

DISCUSSION

Methodological Differences between Tafsir al-Manar and Fazlur Rahman

Tafsir al-Manar and Fazlur Rahman demonstrate significant methodological differences in interpreting the principle of religious freedom, deeply influenced by their respective socio-historical contexts. *Al-Manar*, as a representative of modern tafsir, employs a rational-contextual approach particularly responsive to the challenges of Western colonialism and Christian missionary hegemony. In interpreting QS. Al-Baqarah:256 (*lā ikrāha fī al-dīn*), Rashid Rida emphasized the need to protect Muslim communities from religious coercion that arose due to Christian missionary activities in Egypt. As he explains:

وأما قوله تعالى «لا إكراه في الدين» فبيان لحكمه تعالى أنه لا يكره أحد على الدخول في الدين

("This is an explanation of God's ruling that no one is forced to enter the religion.") (Rida, *Tafsir al-Manar*, vol. 3, p. 37).¹⁷

17 محمد رشيد رضا، "تفسير القرآن الحكيم المنار الجزء الثالث"، 1973
http://scholar.google.com.my/scholar?q=tafsir+al+manar&btnG=&hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5#5.

Rida further contextualized the emergence of Islam's peaceful expansion as a force that encouraged voluntary conversion among polytheists, stating:

فإنه كان من أسباب القوة التي جعلت المشركين يخرجون من دارهم إلى الإسلام

("for it was among the reasons of strength that made the polytheists leave their homes and enter into Islam") (Rida, *Tafsir al-Manar*, vol. 3, p. 37).¹⁸

This illustrates how *al-Manar* strengthens Muslim identity through community protection under colonial challenges.

In contrast, Fazlur Rahman develops a "double movement" hermeneutics to extract universal principles from sacred texts and apply them to modern issues of human rights and pluralism. As Rahman explains:

"The process of interpretation proposed here consists of a double movement, from the present situation to Qur'anic times, then back to the present..." (Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, p. 5).¹⁹

Rahman interprets QS. Al-Baqarah:256 as a universal moral principle that promotes individual autonomy, making religious freedom a basis for global ethics beyond specific historical circumstances.²⁰

These methodological differences reflect their distinct historical settings. *Al-Manar* arose to defend Muslim identity during colonial domination, emphasizing communal defense and prohibiting forced conversion.²¹ Conversely, Rahman addresses post-colonial contexts in Pakistan and the West, focusing on minority rights, secularism, and pluralism. While *al-Manar* maintains exclusive Islamic authority, Rahman integrates universal principles into inclusive interpretations.²² Yet both recognize the necessity of contextual readings of sacred texts: *al-Manar* values local context, while Rahman emphasizes globally applicable ethical values.²³ Another important difference lies in their epistemological sources. *Al-Manar* draws on classical *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, prioritizing the protection of religion (*hifẓ al-dīn*) but is limited to colonial dynamics. Rahman employs Western hermeneutic theories to reconstruct the Qur'an's moral structure for contemporary relevance. In QS. Al-Baqarah:256, *al-Manar* employs legal-theological arguments for community autonomy, whereas Rahman emphasizes individual moral agency. Thus, their approaches differ not only in method but

¹⁸ رضا.

¹⁹ Rahman, *Islam & Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*.

²⁰ Rahman.

²¹ Susilo Susilo, "Reinterpretation of the Meaning of Angels in Tafsir Al-Manar (Critical Analysis Studies)," *Aqwal Journal of Qur'an and Hadis Studies* 4, no. 1 (2023): 67–86, <https://doi.org/10.28918/aqwal.v4i1.915>.

²² Rahman, *Islam & Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*.

²³ Muhammad Zubir, "Social Community in the Qur'an (A Study of Muhammad Abduh's Interpretation in Tafsir Al-Manar)," *Islam Transformatif Journal of Islamic Studies* 6, no. 1 (2022): 43, <https://doi.org/10.30983/it.v6i1.5506>.

also in audience orientation, priorities, and interpretive goals, yet both contribute valuable perspectives for addressing religious freedom and human rights challenges within Islam.²⁴

The Relevance of the Second Approach in the Context of Religious Freedom

In the contemporary study of religious freedom, both *Tafsir al-Manar* and Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics present relevant yet distinct contributions. *Tafsir al-Manar*, pioneered by Rashid Rida, holds particular value in responding to new forms of colonialism reflected in Western cultural hegemony. This approach offers a critical lens through which to examine the marginalization of Muslim identity in the global public sphere. Through its interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah:256, *al-Manar* seeks to challenge narratives that associate Islam with intolerance, especially in the context of rising global Islamophobia.²⁵

Nevertheless, *al-Manar's* strong attachment to the socio-political conditions of the 19th century limits its relevance to contemporary challenges surrounding religious freedom. In contrast, Rahman's hermeneutics offers a more universally applicable framework by framing religious freedom as a fundamental human right, transcending specific historical and geographical boundaries.²⁶ As Rahman explains:

"The Qur'an is the divine response, through the Prophet's mind, to the moral-social situation of the Prophet's Arabia... The first step consists of understanding the meaning of the Qur'an as a whole... The second step is to generalize those specific answers into statements of general moral-social objectives, which can be applied to present circumstances." (Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, pp. 5-6).²⁷

Rahman's approach presents a more inclusive perspective and accommodates diversity in a multireligious society like Indonesia, where interfaith relations are highly complex. His hermeneutical principles create space for more democratic interpretations, allowing readers from diverse backgrounds to engage in dialogue and reinterpretation of sacred texts.²⁸ This inclusivity fosters a framework that accommodates pluralism and encourages constructive interreligious engagement.²⁹ However, the application of Rahman's approach is not without challenges. Traditionalist scholars

²⁴ Khairul Hamim and Muhammad M Abdillah, "Renaissance of Islam: A Content Analysis of Muhammad Rashīd Riḍā's Exegesis," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 13, no. 2 (2023): 104–19, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.132.07>.

²⁵ Moh Dahlan, "Islamic Sharia Reform of Ahmadiyah Sect in Indonesia," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 77, no. 4 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i4.6396>.

²⁶ Rahman, *Islam & Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*.

²⁷ Rahman.

²⁸ Lusiana A Antania, "Pengaruh Pemisahan Hak Aliran Kas dan Hak Kontrol Terhadap Manajemen Laba Akrual Dan Manajemen Laba Riil," *Jmbi Unsrat (Jurnal Ilmiah Manajemen Bisnis Dan Inovasi Universitas Sam Ratulangi)* 10, no. 2 (2023): 1050–69, <https://doi.org/10.35794/jmbi.v10i2.50083>.

²⁹ Apriadi R Simamora, Abdul Hamid, and M D Hikmawan, "Diskriminasi Terhadap Kelompok Minoritas Jemaat Ahmadiyah Indonesia (JAI) Di Tangerang Selatan," *Ijd-Demos* 1, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.31506/ijd.v1i1.4>.

often view this method as overly liberal, particularly when it intersects with debates around Islamic *sharia* and secularism.³⁰ In Egypt, for instance, Rahman's views on religious freedom have been rejected by Salafi groups who perceive them as undermining the authority of sacred texts. Despite these criticisms, in pluralistic societies like Indonesia, interpretive approaches that decouple religious principles from identity politics have proven to be more adaptive and contextually relevant.³¹

In addition, the two approaches diverge significantly in their views on interpretive authority. *Tafsir al-Manar* emphasizes the authority of *ulama* as the legitimate custodians of textual interpretation, thereby delegitimizing unsystematic or individualistic readings.³² Meanwhile, Rahman advocates democratizing interpretation by involving broader public participation, including civil society actors with diverse experiences.³³ The ongoing challenge is thus to balance textual authenticity with inclusive interpretive frameworks. A synthesis of *al-Manar*'s communal orientation and Rahman's participatory model may offer constructive pathways for addressing the complex discourse on religious freedom.

Therefore, the relevance of both approaches, while distinct, lies in their respective sociopolitical contexts. On the one hand, *al-Manar* provides historical insight into resisting cultural colonialism, though it may be less applicable to the pluralistic challenges of the modern era. On the other hand, Rahman's universal hermeneutics holds greater potential to navigate the complexities of religious freedom in diverse societies. Finding a middle ground between authoritative interpretation and inclusivity, strengthened by social cohesion, will be essential in addressing future challenges of religious freedom.³⁴ Open and participatory discourse involving governments, civil society, and religious communities remains indispensable to achieving justice and equality in religious rights for all.³⁵

The Integrative Model of Hermeneutics: al-Manar and Rahman

The integrative model of *al-Manar* and Rahman's hermeneutics proposed in this analysis represents a synthesis between contextual rationalism in *Tafsir al-Manar* and the universal ethical principles

³⁰ Rahman, *Islam & Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*.

³¹ Lucky Nurhadiyanto and Putri Puspita, "Penodaan Agama Ditinjau dari Perspektif Teori Konflik: Studi Kasus Pasal Penodaan Agama di Tanjung Balai," *Deviance Jurnal Kriminologi* 5, no. 1 (2021): 20, <https://doi.org/10.36080/djk.2162>.

³² Muhammad N P Setyabudi, "Konsep dan Matra Konsepsi Toleransi dalam Pemikiran Rainer Forst," *Jurnal Filsafat Indonesia* 3, no. 3 (2020): 81–94, <https://doi.org/10.23887/jfi.v3i3.24895>.

³³ Gabriello D J Susanto and Fatma U Najicha, "Implementasi Transparansi Hukum dalam Lingkup Sosial dan Budaya Dengan Asas Ultimum Remedium," *Civics Jurnal Pendidikan Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 7, no. 2 (2024): 312–20, <https://doi.org/10.36805/civics.v7i2.5550>.

³⁴ Linda Novianti, "Politik Hukum Indonesia yang Berkaitan dengan Statuta Roma dalam Penegakkan Pelanggaran Hak Minoritas," *Khazanah Hukum* 3, no. 1 (2021): 34–46, <https://doi.org/10.15575/kh.v3i1.8759>.

³⁵ Istriani Istriani and Wiwik Afifah, "Tanggungjawab Negara untuk Memajukan Hak Kebebasan Beragama bagi Kelompok Minoritas," *Ciastech* 6, no. 1 (2023): 267, <https://doi.org/10.31328/ciastech.v6i1.5269>.

proposed by Fazlur Rahman. As Zubir notes, *al-Manar* emphasizes the significance of history and context in understanding Islamic teachings, serving to avoid excessive relativism.³⁶ The first stage of this model involves understanding the textual meaning within its historical context, aligning with *al-Manar's* approach that links *tafsir* to social issues such as colonialism, thus making it responsive to contemporary challenges³⁷

The second stage identifies universal principles, drawing upon Rahman's emphasis on freedom of conscience as a fundamental value in modern discourse. The third stage applies these principles to contemporary issues while considering local contexts.³⁸ Within this framework, the model can inform advocacy efforts for minority rights in Indonesia by integrating universal values with socio-cultural awareness. For example, in addressing the Blasphemy Law, this model critiques discriminatory articles by referencing universal human rights principles, while also accounting for the cultural and religious sensibilities of Indonesian society.³⁹

The strength of this integrative model lies in its ability to address critiques of both approaches: maintaining historical consciousness to avoid rigid literalism associated with *al-Manar*, while benefiting from the analytical flexibility offered by Rahman. In an educational context, this model could be implemented in Islamic boarding schools by integrating historical studies with discussions on contemporary issues, thereby enhancing students' interpretive skills. However, resistance from literalist groups poses a challenge, as they may reject the integration of Western hermeneutics with traditional Islamic frameworks.⁴⁰

Beyond education, this integrative model offers broader applications in public policy. Its principles can serve as a foundation for crafting policies that uphold religious freedom while remaining sensitive to local cultural identities.⁴¹ Further research is needed to assess the model's practical effectiveness across diverse contexts, such as Sunni–Shia tensions or the persecution of

³⁶ Zubir, "Social Community in the Qur'an (A Study of Muhammad Abduh's Interpretation in Tafsir Al-Manar)."

³⁷ M F Khafizuddin, "Analisis Kaidah Tafsir dalam Menafsirkan Ayat-Ayat Sains Study Tafsir Al-Manar," *Hamalatul Qur'an Jurnal Ilmu Alqur'an* 5, no. 2 (2024): 499–510, <https://doi.org/10.37985/hq.v5i2.271>.

³⁸ Hamim and Abdillah, "Renaissance of Islam: A Content Analysis of Muhammad Rashīd Riḍā's Exegesis."

³⁹ Susilo, "Reinterpretation of the Meaning of Angels in Tafsir Al-Manar (Critical Analysis Studies)."

⁴⁰ Hamidreza Fazeli, Alireza Fazeli, and Shokrollah Fararoeic, "Critical Study of Tafsir Al-Manar (Interpretation of the Holy Quran) Regarding the Miracles of Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) and Prophet Moses (PBUH)," *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 2022, 6977–88, <https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6ns2.6678>.

⁴¹ Halimatussa'diyah Halimatussa'diyah, Deddy Ilyas, and Eko Zulfikar, "The Minangkabau Interpretation of the Qur'an: Tradition and Characteristics of the Minangkabau Interpretation of the Qur'an," *Al Quds Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Hadis* 7, no. 3 (2024): 613, <https://doi.org/10.29240/alquds.v7i3.8584>.

Rohingya Muslims.⁴² Expanding the model's application in these intra-faith and interfaith settings would allow for greater relevance in addressing complex socio-religious challenges.⁴³

In academic discourse, this model helps bridge the divide between traditional and modern Islamic thought, promoting a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings. As such, it moves beyond theoretical synthesis by offering practical insights into contemporary issues related to human rights, religious freedom, and social justice. Ultimately, the integrative hermeneutic model of *al-Manar* and Rahman may serve as a foundational pillar for Islamic thought reform, one that is responsive to global challenges and capable of harmonizing universal ethical values with local socio-cultural contexts, thereby enhancing both religious understanding and societal development.⁴⁴

Furthermore, this integrative model resonates deeply with the philosophical hermeneutic foundations laid by Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur. Gadamer's concept of *fusion of horizons* (*Horizontverschmelzung*) creates a dialogical space where *al-Manar's* contextual rationality and Rahman's universal ethics can interact without subordinating one to the other. This encounter bridges historical specificity with contemporary applicability. Meanwhile, Ricoeur's notions of *distanciation* and *appropriation* facilitate the reinterpretation of Qur'anic verses such as QS. Al-Baqarah:256, allowing sacred texts to remain normative while engaging with modern challenges like human rights and pluralism.⁴⁵ These philosophical contributions enrich the integrative model, transforming it from a simple methodological synthesis into a reflective, ethically engaged approach to Qur'anic interpretation.

The integrative hermeneutic model developed from *al-Manar* and Rahman offers significant implications beyond theoretical discourse. In the pedagogical realm, this model may serve as a corrective to the dominance of literalist interpretations in Islamic education. By incorporating contextual rationalism and universal ethical principles into religious curricula, particularly in *pesantren*, *madrasah*, and Islamic universities, this model can foster a more dialogical and inclusive approach to understanding scripture. Students would not only engage with textual meanings but also critically examine the socio-ethical contexts in which those meanings operate.

⁴² Hanna Salsabila et al., "Menelisik Tafsir Modern-Kontemporer di Indonesia Abad 20 M," *Jurnal Dirsah Islamiyah* 5, no. 1 (2023): 290–305, <https://doi.org/10.47467/jdi.v5i1.2878>.

⁴³ Ibrahim I Adam, "Islamic Modernism and Tafsir in Nineteenth Century Egypt: A Critical Analysis of Muhammad Abduh's Exegesis," *Journal of Quranic Sciences and Research* 4, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.30880/jqsr.2023.04.01.006>.

⁴⁴ C Kurzman and M Browsers, *An Islamic Reformation?* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

⁴⁵ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*.

This model also aligns with Abdullah Saeed's call for "critical hermeneutics" in Muslim pedagogy, which emphasizes historical awareness and moral reasoning as essential components of textual engagement.⁴⁶ Applying this framework can empower learners to navigate between fidelity to tradition and responsiveness to contemporary ethical dilemmas, such as interfaith relations, extremism, and the digital misinterpretation of Qur'anic verses. In a broader philosophical sense, it represents a middle path between relativism and absolutism, preserving the authority of revelation while promoting critical engagement with the complexities of modern pluralistic societies.

Contextualization and Universality in the Hermeneutics of the Qur'an: A Comparative Analysis of al-Manar and Fazlur Rahman

This research reveals the fundamental differences between the hermeneutical approach of *Tafsir al-Manar* and Fazlur Rahman in interpreting the principle of religious freedom. *Al-Manar*, as a representation of early modern interpretation, employs a rational-contextual method influenced by colonial challenges, interpreting QS. Al-Baqarah:256 as protection of Muslim identity from missionary pressures. This approach is rooted in communal resistance and the defence of Islamic authority. Meanwhile, Fazlur Rahman develops a *double movement* hermeneutics that extracts universal ethical values from texts and contextualizes them into modern issues such as human rights and pluralism. These differences extend beyond method into epistemological foundations: *al-Manar* relies on *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, while Rahman integrates Western hermeneutic theories within Islamic traditions.

The contextualization of these two models illustrates the dialectic between tradition and modernity in Qur'anic interpretation. While *al-Manar* effectively addresses Western hegemony, it remains limited in confronting the complexities of multireligious societies. Conversely, Rahman's approach, though inclusive, faces skepticism from traditionalists. This tension between textual authority and inclusivity reflects broader dynamics in contemporary Islamic thought. The integrative model proposed here seeks to combine the strengths of both: *al-Manar*'s contextual rationalism and Rahman's universal principles, despite the ongoing challenges of integrating Western hermeneutics and democratizing interpretive authority.

In the Indonesian context, Rahman's hermeneutics has practical resonance amid debates on religious freedom and legal pluralism. For instance, discussions on revising Indonesia's Blasphemy Law could benefit from his approach, which promotes freedom of conscience without undermining social harmony. At the same time, this model can be contrasted with Morocco's state-led religious reforms or Tunisia's post-revolution pluralism, both of which reflect differing applications

⁴⁶ L U C Nkwocha, "Muslim-Christian Dialogue of Life via Hospitality: A Theology of Abrahamic Asymmetric-Mutual Substitutive Responsibility Applied in an African Context" (University of Notre Dame, 2018).

of contextual ethics in Muslim-majority societies. Globally, Rahman's method invites engagement with international human rights instruments, while *al-Manar*'s model offers insight into resisting cultural imperialism. Both are relevant, but their use depends on socio-political settings. The integrative model helps avoid binary choices: rather than choosing between secular liberalism and traditionalism, it proposes an ethical middle way grounded in scriptural authenticity and contemporary needs.

In applying this integrative model to QS. Al-Baqarah:256, its practical potential becomes clearer. From *al-Manar*'s perspective, the verse emerged within Medina's context, where some Muslim families were concerned about the faith of children who previously adhered to other religions. Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida interpreted this verse as a defense of community integrity against missionary threats during the colonial era, functioning not only as spiritual guidance but also as a socio-political stance. This reflects *al-Manar*'s rational-contextual reading attuned to communal and political dynamics.

Fazlur Rahman, through his *double movement*, further elevates the analysis by extracting the universal ethical imperative: that religious belief must be based on personal conviction, free from coercion. For Rahman, this principle transcends Medina's historical context, aligning with contemporary human rights frameworks grounded in justice, mercy, and human dignity. The integrative model synthesizes these two layers: beginning with historical grounding (per *al-Manar*) to avoid anachronism, then extracting universal ethical values (per Rahman) applicable to modern pluralistic societies.

In contemporary multireligious contexts such as Indonesia, this model offers a balanced framework for addressing sensitive issues like the application of blasphemy laws. Instead of rigid legal interpretations that risk marginalizing minorities, the integrative model promotes freedom of conscience while respecting local religious and cultural dynamics. This can inform policy revision, promote inclusive civic education, strengthen interfaith dialogue, and empower civil society in legal reforms while preserving social cohesion.

Thus, the integrative hermeneutics of *al-Manar* and Fazlur Rahman enriches Qur'anic discourse, providing a viable framework that remains faithful to tradition while responding to the modern challenges of pluralism, human rights, and social justice.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated significant methodological differences between *Tafsir al-Manar* and Fazlur Rahman in interpreting the principle of religious freedom. *Al-Manar*, employing a rational-contextual approach, emphasizes communal protection and resistance against colonial missionary pressures, as reflected in its interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah:256. Conversely, Fazlur Rahman's double movement hermeneutics advances the universal ethical principle of freedom of conscience as a fundamental human right, transcending specific historical contexts. These differences reflect distinct historical experiences and epistemological orientations, yet both approaches contribute valuable perspectives to the discourse on religious freedom.

The integrative hermeneutic model proposed in this study synthesizes *al-Manar's* historical consciousness with Rahman's universal ethics, offering a dynamic framework for interpreting Qur'anic texts like QS. Al-Baqarah:256. By acknowledging the verse's original communal function while extracting its timeless ethical imperative, this model enables more responsive interpretations within contemporary multireligious societies. Its practical relevance is illustrated through policy recommendations that balance freedom of belief with sensitivity to local socio-cultural contexts, such as revisiting blasphemy laws, strengthening interfaith dialogue, and empowering civil society participation in legal reform. This research, thus, contributes to Qur'anic hermeneutics by bridging the methodological gap between modern and contemporary approaches, enriching scholarly understanding of the dialectic between tradition and modernity. This integrative model offers a constructive alternative to polarized debates between traditionalism and liberalism, promoting inclusive, ethical, and contextually grounded interpretations of religious freedom.

Future research should further explore the applicability of this integrative model across diverse sociopolitical contexts. Comparative studies across regions such as Indonesia, Egypt, and Pakistan can illuminate variations in their implementation. The role of digital technologies in expanding inclusive hermeneutic dialogue also warrants attention, as do interdisciplinary investigations involving anthropology, education, and political science to assess the model's practical impact on religious education and policy. A deeper analysis of resistance from literalist groups may inform more effective advocacy strategies for promoting ethical and inclusive Qur'anic interpretations in pluralistic societies.

Beyond its academic contribution, the integrative model proposed here holds practical significance in addressing emerging challenges related to the rise of religious populism, politicization of identity, and politicization of exclusive interpretations. In multicultural societies like Indonesia and within the broader ASEAN region, where tensions between identity politics and religious

pluralism persist, this model offers a conceptual framework for promoting social cohesion and intercultural dialogue based on universal ethical values rooted in the Qur'an. Within Islamic education, it may inform curriculum development that incorporates critical historical analysis, human rights discourse, and interfaith understanding, equipping future Muslim scholars with ethical and context-sensitive interpretive tools for navigating complex global realities.

In sum, this study affirms that philosophical hermeneutics, when dialogically integrated with Islamic interpretive traditions, offers a viable and ethically responsive framework for addressing contemporary challenges of religious freedom, pluralism, and social justice in the global Muslim community. This study not only advances hermeneutical scholarship but also contributes actionable insights for policymakers, educators, and religious leaders committed to fostering inclusive and just religious societies.

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