

The Qur'anic Vision of the Religious Other: From Doctrinal Difference to Human Coexistence

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Abstract

The unprecedented global interconnectedness brought about by globalization and technological advancement has given rise to numerous challenges confronting humanity. Among the most prominent of these are the concepts of peaceful coexistence and the related issues of equality, freedom of religion, the rights of minorities, and human rights in general.

Religious communities, caught between internal exclusivism and apprehension toward the other, have long resisted the idea of diversity, viewing it as a direct threat to their identity and existence. Within the Islamic context, much ink and indeed much blood has been shed between the implications of "To you your religion, and to me mine" and the assertion that "Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam."

This article examines the Qur'anic text with regard to the concepts of tolerance and difference, while exploring how these two notions have been systematically distorted by fundamentalist readings that focus on the literal appearance of scriptural texts while disregarding their historical contexts and humanitarian objectives. It is precisely here that the divergence emerges between a purposive religious interpretation and a fundamentalist approach driven by narrow sectarian objectives.

Keywords: tolerance; difference; coexistence; fundamentalism.

Introduction

The growing openness to the Western world, together with increasing calls for human rights, individual autonomy, and freedom of expression, has brought numerous intellectual issues to the forefront of contemporary Islamic discourse. Whether the debate has been conducted through attempts at assimilation and reconciliation with Western thought or through efforts to formulate an Islamic alternative capable of confronting the cultural, civilizational, and religious other, various intellectual schools have sought to employ religious texts as instruments for advancing their respective agendas. Among the issues that have generated and continue to generate considerable debate is the question of tolerance, difference, and Islam's position toward them.

Religious texts abound with verses inviting reflection upon the diversity and plurality that permeate the universe. They likewise emphasize the diversity among human beings, considering it one of God's signs. Allah, the Exalted, says:

(وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافُ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَالْوَبَائِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ)

Moreover, the Qur'an seeks to diminish the significance of physical and material differences by emphasizing the unity of human origin. Accordingly, divine preference among human beings is based upon piety and competition in drawing closer to God. This undoubtedly lays the foundation for a spirit of tolerance, acceptance of those who differ, and openness toward the other.

Conversely, fundamentalist discourse often disregards this ethos of tolerance and strives to impose a single model of religiosity, thought, dress, lifestyle, and even everyday practices. In doing so, it excludes the many scriptural passages that call for acknowledging, accepting, and embracing diversity. The textual foundations upon which these fundamentalist movements rely combined with the failure of the nation-state project, as well as the shortcomings of secular, liberal, and even political Islamist movements in presenting a viable alternative have contributed significantly to their influence. Above all, however, fundamentalism's claim to possess the absolute truth has reinforced the rejection of the other, even within the Islamic religious tradition itself.

Caught between these opposing tendencies, individuals often find themselves lost amid competing intellectual currents, conflicting interpretations, and the resulting confusion in practical application. Some scriptural texts establish the principles of tolerance, while others are selectively employed to justify violence and bloodshed. This raises several fundamental questions: How does Islam conceptualize tolerance and difference? What are their limits? How can the mechanisms governing their application be properly defined? And what means are available to counter fundamentalist discourse?

To address these questions, this article is organized as follows:

Introduction.

The Concept of Tolerance.

The Concept of Difference.

The Qur'anic Perspective on the Religious Other.

Conclusion.

1. Tolerance

Among the most closely intertwined yet seemingly opposing concepts in classical and contemporary Islamic intellectual discourse are the notions of tolerance and difference. These two concepts have occupied a central place in scholarly debate and have generated numerous questions. A close examination of how various intellectual currents have understood them reveals the pitfalls of their practical application. This raises an essential question: How does the Qur'an present and employ these two concepts?

An examination of their Qur'anic meanings enables us to identify both the proper parameters for engaging with them and the dangers associated with their misuse, particularly within extremist fundamentalist schools of thought.

The al-Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ defines the root s-m-ḥ (samaḥa) as follows: samaḥa means to be gentle, lenient, and accommodating. It is said, "the branch became smooth," meaning that it straightened and was freed from knots; "a person was generous," meaning that he gave willingly in both hardship and ease out of nobility and generosity; "he granted someone a request," meaning that he facilitated it. The verb samuḥa denotes becoming characterized by magnanimity and generosity, while asmaḥat nafsuḥu signifies that one's soul became compliant, submissive, and yielding.

Sāmaḥahu means to agree to another's request, or to pardon someone's offense, as in the supplication, "May Allah forgive you." Sammaḥa means to make something smooth and easy, while tasāmaḥa denotes leniency or indulgence. Likewise, al-samāḥ refers to tolerance and forbearance, as reflected in the expression bay' al-samāḥ, which denotes selling at a price lower than the customary market value.²

From an examination of the meanings associated with this linguistic root, it becomes evident that it revolves around the notions of leniency, gentleness, and compliance. It is noteworthy, however, that the term tolerance (tasāmuḥ) itself does not occur in the Qur'an. Instead, the Qur'an employs synonymous concepts such as forgiveness ('afw), pardon (ṣafḥ), remission (maghfirah), forbearance (ḥilm), and gentleness (līn). Among these are:

In the sense of pardon: Allah, the Exalted, says:

3. (يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ وَأَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا لَكُمْ فَأَحْذَرُوهُمْ وَإِنْ تَعَفَّوْا وَتَصَفَّحُوا وَتَغْفِرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ)

In the sense of forgiveness: Allah says:

4. (وَلَمَنْ صَبَرَ وَغَفَرَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ)

In the sense of overlooking and excusing: Allah says:

5. (خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ)

Here, 'afw signifies overlooking wrongdoing and refraining from punishment.

In the sense of patience: Allah says:

6. (وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَئِنْ صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِلصَّابِرِينَ)

A careful reading of the Qur'anic verses reveals that tolerance carries diverse semantic dimensions extending beyond the purely religious sphere to encompass cultural, social, and political aspects, all with the aim of fostering a diverse society whose true strength lies in its diversity.

In this regard, Mohammed Abed al-Jabri argues that tolerance belongs among the virtues and noble moral qualities. Nevertheless, he maintains that it is preferable to dissociate it from the strictly religious sphere and instead relate it to philosophy, since philosophy serves as the instrument capable of refining and critically examining concepts, thereby enriching them and enhancing their influence on rational understanding as well as practical application. He further contends that the first generation of intellectuals within Arab-Islamic civilization defended a conception of faith founded upon moderation and tolerance a liberal conception, if one may legitimately employ that term in this context.⁷ Al-Jabri goes even further by arguing that the Murji'ah represented the school that most faithfully embodied tolerance in Islam, as their thought revolved around two principal ideas: tolerance, manifested in their understanding of faith, and the affirmation of human freedom through their conception of divine decree.⁸ This perspective suggests that although the explicit term tolerance does not appear in the Qur'an, Islamic practice itself historically reflected principles of tolerance, not merely within the Muslim community but more broadly.

According to Mohammed Arkoun, although the major texts of Arab-Islamic thought contained the earliest seeds of the modern concept of tolerance as evidenced in the works of figures such as al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Kindī, al-Tawḥīdī, and al-Ma'arrī it would nevertheless be inaccurate to speak of tolerance as a widespread social practice within Muslim societies. This was due to prevailing social structures and dominant intellectual frameworks. Since the thirteenth century CE,

Muslim societies experienced profound difficulties, witnessing clear divisions among ethnic and cultural groups, urban elites, and the popular classes, with social and intellectual barriers gradually erected between them.⁹

2. Difference

A linguistic examination of the term difference reveals that it denotes disagreement or dispute. It is said, *ikhtalafa al-qawm*, meaning that people differed in their opinions, with each adopting a position distinct from that of the others. The term also signifies opposition, contradiction, and divergence. One says, *ikhtalafa ma'ahu*, meaning that one opposed, contradicted, or disagreed with another. The opposite of difference is agreement and uniformity. Likewise, when two matters *ikhtalafā*, they fail to coincide. The term may also denote diversity, as in the expression *abnā' mukhtalifūn* ("children of different kinds"), or *khilfah*, meaning a family consisting equally of males and females.

The original root of *ikhtilāf* derives from *khilāfah*, which literally denotes the succession of one thing after another. Thus, one says, *khalafa fulānun fulānan*, meaning that one succeeded another in carrying out a particular responsibility. A *khalīfah* is therefore one who succeeds another and takes his place. Disagreement came to be described as *ikhtilāf* because each disputing party seeks to replace the other's opinion with his own. Among the additional meanings associated with the term are change and separation.¹⁰

From the foregoing, it becomes evident that the concept revolves around two closely related meanings: disagreement and divergence, on the one hand, and succession or replacement, on the other. These two meanings are interconnected, since disagreement ordinarily emerges only after an established state of consensus, whereby a new opinion succeeds or unsettles the previous one.

Turning to the Qur'an, we find that the term *ikhtilāf* appears in multiple grammatical forms: singular and plural, past and present tense, verbal noun and active participle. Altogether, it occurs in fifty-two verses.¹¹ A broad analysis of these verses allows them to be classified into two principal categories: those dealing with human existence and those concerning the natural and cosmic order.

With respect to the cosmos, the Qur'an repeatedly directs human beings to contemplate the diversity that permeates creation and distinguishes the various creatures animals, plants, birds, and human beings alike presenting such diversity as one of God's signs worthy of reflection. This is expressed in the verse:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ ثَمَرَاتٍ مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهَا وَمِنَ الْجِبَالِ جُدَدٌ بَيضٌ وَحُمْرٌ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهَا وَغَرَابِيبُ سُودٌ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ (وَالْدَوَابِّ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ كَذَلِكَ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ¹² .

Collectively, the Qur'anic verses establish diversity as a universal law and an innate feature of creation that cannot be denied. Nowhere is this more evident than in the human world for those who reflect.

Regarding humanity, the Qur'an highlights several forms of difference:

1. Difference in Colour

The origin of humankind is one: Adam, peace be upon him. It is therefore understood that humanity originally shared a common physical appearance. As his descendants multiplied, however, differences in skin colour emerged owing to factors such as climate, diet, and disease. Allah says:

¹³ . (وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافُ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَأَلْوَانِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ)

According to the exegetes, the diversity of human complexion is attributable to several causes, including climate, mixed parentage, skin-related illnesses, and differences in nutrition. Consequently, variation in skin color has never been regarded as evidence of a difference in human nature or species.¹⁴

2. Difference in Language

Among the signs upon which the Qur'an invites reflection is the diversity of human languages. Despite humanity's common divine origin and descent from Adam, languages differ. According to Ibn 'Āshūr, this diversity is itself a magnificent sign of God's power and the perfection of His creation. Human language was originally one when people inhabited the same place, and linguistic diversity emerged only as they dispersed across distant lands. He further argues that linguistic change occurred gradually as necessity required. The lesson to be drawn is that diversity of expression coexists with unity of origin.¹⁵

In this context, human races have multiplied and diversified, while some groups have claimed superiority over others at times on the basis of white racial centrality, at others through claims of civilizational superiority, and at still others by virtue of power and domination. The Qur'an, however, presents a vision of diversity that embraces human plurality while preserving the cultural, intellectual, and religious distinctiveness of every society. Allah says:

¹⁶ . (يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا)

Humanity developed from family affiliation to tribal belonging, then to ethnic and civilizational identities. Throughout history, successive civilizations sought to establish universal systems into which all particular identities would dissolve while simultaneously imposing those systems upon others. Islam did not reject this historical dynamic outright; rather, it reformed and regulated it. Its approach is not merely one of reconciling opposing binaries but one centered upon the human being.¹⁷ More specifically, it is centered upon the human being who is naturally inclined toward openness and interaction with diverse civilizational, intellectual, and religious traditions. The universality of Islam thus constitutes an organic and unifying interaction among humanity, seeking harmony between divine guidance and humanity's collective future. It is a universality founded upon civilizational dialogue and the rejection of exclusionary dichotomies such as East versus West or North versus South. Islam recognizes no civilizational privilege, not even for Arab identity itself, nor does it endorse any conception of cultural particularism isolated from others.¹⁸ Accordingly, the verse cited above simultaneously emphasizes the universal human dimension ("O mankind") while preserving the distinctiveness of every human community ("that you may know one another").

3. Difference in Religion

Another form of difference concerns religion that is, diversity in direction, religious law, and method. Allah says:

¹⁹ . (وَلِكُلٍّ وِجْهَةٌ هُوَ مُوَلِّيهَا فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ أَيْنَ مَا تَكُونُوا يَأْتِ بِكُمُ اللَّهُ جَمِيعًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ)

He also says:

(لِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مِنكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَٰكِن لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ)²⁰

This form of difference stems from the human capacity to exercise free choice. It encompasses diversity of religions and legal systems, differences in social orders and ways of life, as well as the plurality of opinions and ideas and all the particulars that arise from these broader categories. Unlike the previously discussed forms of diversity, this type can expand or contract according to the degree of interaction among peoples, the geographical spread of nations, and the opportunities for the exchange of interests and experiences.

How, then, does Islam view religious difference and the doctrinal other?

3. The Qur'anic Perspective on the Religious Other

First, the Qur'an applies the term *dīn* (religion) to various belief systems, whether revealed or non-revealed. Allah instructs His Prophet to address the polytheists of Quraysh:

(لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ) .²¹

Commenting on this verse, al-Qurṭubī states:

"For you is your religion, and for me is mine' carries the meaning of a warning. It is similar to His saying: 'For us are our deeds, and for you are your deeds,' meaning: if you are content with your religion, then we are content with ours. This was before the command to fight and was later abrogated by the Verse of the Sword. Others held that the entire *sūrah* was abrogated, while yet others maintained that none of it was abrogated because it is declarative in nature. Another interpretation is that 'For you is your religion' means the recompense of your religion, and 'for me is the recompense of my religion.' Their belief is called a religion because they embraced and adhered to it. It has also been said that the meaning is: 'For you is your recompense, and for me is mine,' since *dīn* also signifies recompense."²²

Second, the Qur'an considers embracing religion to be a matter of personal choice and rejects coercion in accepting Islam. Allah says:

(لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ)²³

In his commentary on this verse, al-Saʿdī writes:

"Allah informs us that there is no compulsion in religion because there is no need for coercion in matters of faith. Compulsion is only required where the signs of a matter are obscure, its evidence ambiguous, or where the matter itself is deeply detested by human nature. As for this upright religion and straight path, its proofs are clear to reason, its ways are manifest, its reality is evident, and guidance has been distinguished from error. Whoever reflects upon it, even briefly, will prefer and choose it. But whoever possesses corrupt intentions, a depraved will, and an evil soul sees the truth yet prefers falsehood, recognizes what is good yet inclines toward what is vile. Allah has no need to compel such a person into religion, for coercion yields neither benefit nor genuine faith, and the faith of one who is compelled is not valid..."²⁴

Although Qur'anic commentators differed regarding whether this verse was later abrogated, the apparent meaning of al-Saʿdī's interpretation is that faith cannot be founded upon coercion. Accordingly, embracing Islam or refraining from doing so remains a matter of personal conviction belonging to the individual alone.

Third, the Qur'an does not prohibit Muslims from maintaining relations with non-Muslims, provided that they are not engaged in hostility against Islam or its followers. Allah says:

(لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ) إِنَّمَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَأَخْرَجُوكُم مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ وَظَاهَرُوا عَلَىٰ إِخْرَاجِكُمْ أَن تَوَلَّوهُمْ
25. "وَمَن يَتَوَلَّهُمْ فَوَلَّيْنَاكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ".

Al-Qurtubī explains that this verse constitutes a divine permission to maintain ties with those who neither showed hostility toward the believers nor fought against them.²⁶ The verse clearly indicates that the prohibition of alliance is based upon enmity and warfare rather than upon religious difference in itself. Indeed, when the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) concluded his covenant with the Jews, it included the provision: "The Jews shall have their religion, and the Muslims shall have theirs," just as Allah commanded him to address all who differed from him in faith.

One may therefore ask: How does the Qur'an relate to the previous revealed scriptures?

Turning to this religious dimension, the Qur'an presents itself as a universal revelation whose themes are cosmic and whose vision of humanity embraces engagement with all civilizational traditions and systems of knowledge, assimilating them before transcending them. It goes beyond merely preserving the infallible religious heritage of humanity from Adam to Muhammad by retrieving that legacy through affirmation, then reassessing, correcting, and ultimately re-presenting it through the principle of hegemony.

All previous revealed scriptures descended in the Holy Land, whereas the Qur'an was revealed in the Sacred Land (Makkah). According to the author, this distinction constitutes a subtle yet fundamental methodological difference. The scriptures revealed in the Holy Land were addressed to particular peoples and were therefore national or communal in scope, situated within a divine discourse bounded by a specific historical time and geographical setting.²⁷ Consequently, despite their divine origin, they were covenantal scriptures addressed to particular communities. By contrast, the Qur'an was revealed to all humankind, encompassing all times, places, and peoples. It embodies the dynamic process of universal history and corresponds, in human consciousness, to the movement of cosmic existence, as portrayed in Sūrat al-Wāqī'ah.

When speaking of both the previous scriptures and the Qur'an, Allah associates two defining qualities: confirmation and hegemony. He says:

28. (وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ).

Confirmation signifies the Qur'an's acknowledgment of the previous scriptures and its engagement with the themes they addressed. Hegemony, on the other hand, denotes rescuing humanity's spiritual heritage from the darkness of mythology, the obscurity of superstition, and the constraints of animistic and dualistic modes of thought, while reconstructing truth through a more coherent presentation and refining the historical record.²⁹ In other words, it represents a form of critical supervision intended to correct, reform, and ultimately supersede the legal systems of earlier revelations.

Evidence of this critical retrieval lies in the Qur'an's extensive, detailed, and sustained treatment of the experiences of earlier prophets from Adam to Jesus. For example, Moses is mentioned 136 times in the Qur'an, Adam 25 times, Abraham 69 times, Jesus 25 times, and the Torah 18 times.³⁰ Through these narratives, the Qur'an exposes numerous distortions found in the Torah and the Gospel, refutes many misconceptions, and employs a wide range of argumentative methods to do

civilizational crisis, entrusting Muslims in particular with the task of seeking within it the alternative methodology capable of addressing humanity's predicament. Jawdat Sa'īd? Wait the author here cites Muḥammad Abū al-Qāsim Ḥājī Ḥamad, who states:

"For Muslims, the task will be confined to searching for this epistemological methodology within the Qur'an itself. As for the rest of the world, it will seek its way toward it through various philosophical approaches in its attempt to reach the substance of an alternative civilization."³⁹

Thus, in addition to being a preserved, confirming, and authoritative Book, the Qur'an constitutes a conscious counterpart to the movement of the cosmos itself. At the structural level, its composition resembles that of the universe: just as the cosmic order would be disrupted were a single star displaced, so too would the coherence of the Qur'an be disturbed were a single letter altered. It is noble, continually revealing divine laws and universal principles without exhausting its meanings; hidden in depth, inviting discovery through the diverse intellectual tools available to human reason; and although revealed in Arabic, it is perfectly clear, for its divine use of the Arabic language transcends ordinary human expression, elevating every word into a precise technical concept.

Nor was the revelation of the Qur'an to Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh in the Cave of Ḥirā' fifteen centuries ago a matter of historical coincidence. Rather, it reflected precise divine determination in both time and place. Allah says:

(إِنَّمَا أَمِِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ رَبَّ هَذِهِ الْبَلَدَةِ الَّذِي حَرَّمَهَا وَلَهُ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ أَمِِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَأَنْ أَتْلُو الْقُرْآنَ) ⁴⁰

Here, the Qur'an links together a final Prophet after whom there will be no further messenger until Allah inherits the earth and all that is upon it with a mission originating in the Sacred Land of Makkah, whereas the Torah and the Gospel were revealed in the Blessed Land. Moreover, the Prophet was sent to an unlettered people who were entrusted with conveying the divine message to all humankind.⁴¹ According to the author's interpretation, the first stage of their historical emergence was realized through the Prophet's mission, while a second stage is associated with Israel's return to and occupation of Palestine. Although the Qur'an was revealed within a particular historical context and responded to the challenges of its own age, it remains open to both the present and the future,⁴² engaging with every existing and emerging intellectual, civilizational, and religious system.

Accordingly, critical retrieval is not primarily concerned with correcting historical narratives; rather, its objective is to uncover within the Qur'an the methodological principles from which a coherent epistemological framework may be derived. Such an endeavor can only be achieved by reading the Qur'an as an integrated and organically unified whole, rather than through the fragmentary approach that isolates individual verses from their broader context. This also requires moving beyond the rigid dichotomy between the Meccan and Medinan revelations,⁴³ which traditionally assigns doctrinal matters exclusively to the former and legal rulings exclusively to the latter, despite the fact that the final canonical arrangement of the Qur'an transcends such a division.

The methodology presented by the Qur'an is capable of revealing the changing conditions and circumstances of every age while remaining greater than any single historical period.⁴⁴ This does not imply rejecting the achievements of contemporary human reason or dismissing the theoretical and epistemological contributions of modern Western civilization. Rather, the task is to

recontextualize these intellectual achievements outside the confines of positivist methodologies that either exclude God altogether or deify nature and humanity. Such a reorientation takes place within a comprehensive worldview grounded in the dynamic relationship between the unseen, humanity, and nature.⁴⁵

This constitutes the essence of what the author describes as the methodology of combining the two readings: the revealed reading, liberated from the constraints of theological dogmatism, and the objective scientific reading, freed from the limitations of materialism. Reading with the pen thus becomes an act of investigation, inquiry, and serious intellectual effort aimed at identifying the theoretical and methodological foundations of both the natural and the human sciences before reassessing them in the light of the Qur'an. The basis of this synthesis, therefore, lies in examining both domains simultaneously: the Qur'an and empirical reality.

From this perspective, the first step in such integration requires the researcher to develop a critical and analytical understanding of the methodological and epistemological problems governing the philosophy of both the natural and the human sciences before returning to the Qur'an not merely to establish agreement or disagreement between the "revealed book" and the "observable book," but to formulate a comprehensive worldview encompassing the three inseparable dimensions of the unseen, humanity, and nature.⁴⁶

Such an integrated cosmic understanding can only emerge through reading the Qur'an as a coherent organic whole rather than as isolated textual fragments. This requires approaching it as a universal scripture in its themes, absolute in its structure by virtue of its divine origin, confirming and exercising authority not only over previous revealed scriptures but also over the intellectual, philosophical, and civilizational products of the human mind. In this understanding, the Qur'an transcends all global epistemological systems and civilizational paradigms, remaining confined neither to a particular geography nor to a specific historical epoch.⁴⁷ Consequently, it alone possesses the capacity to lead contemporary humanity beyond the dual confines of theological and material alienation toward a comprehensive and integrative dialogue between the unseen, the human being, and the universe.

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing discussion, the following conclusions may be drawn:

Islam is the religion of divine unity in all its implications. At the same time, it acknowledges the diversity and differences that exist among human beings whether as individuals or communities, peoples and tribes, or nations and civilizations and regards such diversity as an inherent aspect of human nature, as previously demonstrated.

As the religion of human nature, Islam calls upon people to respond to this innate disposition by promoting mutual acquaintance and expanding the sphere of human interaction. Indeed, the greatest incentive for such interaction lies precisely in the diversity that characterizes humanity, for things that are entirely alike have little need of one another, whereas difference creates the conditions for exchange and cooperation.

Tolerance is a fundamental principle in Islam rather than a contingent response to changing circumstances. It is therefore established as a clear and consistent principle from the outset,

independent of temporary utilitarian considerations. Its practice is governed by well-defined legal principles that remain faithful to the higher objectives of Islamic law.

Difference constitutes a divine sign manifested both in the universe and in humanity. Consequently, it must also be acknowledged within the religious and doctrinal sphere, a principle firmly established by the Qur'an, particularly in the Medinan verses.

The Qur'an is the final and authoritative revelation. It engages with humanity's spiritual heritage through a process of critical and corrective retrieval. In this capacity, it adopts an evaluative stance toward all revealed scriptures and religious traditions alike.

The Qur'an's engagement and openness extend beyond the revealed scriptures to encompass intellectual traditions, philosophical schools, and even existentialist and nihilistic currents of thought. It therefore offers a comprehensive epistemological framework capable of engaging with the full spectrum of human intellectual production while transcending its limitations.

¹ Qur'an, Sūrat al-Rūm, verse 22.

² Academy of the Arabic Language, *Al-Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ* (The Intermediate Dictionary), Al-Shorouk International Library, Cairo, Egypt, 1st ed., 2004, p. 447.

³ Qur'an, Sūrat al-Taghābun, verse 14.

⁴ Qur'an, Sūrat al-Shūrā, verse 43.

⁵ Qur'an, Sūrat al-A'rāf, verse 199.

⁶ Qur'an, Sūrat al-Naḥl, verse 126.

⁷ Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri, *Intellectuals in Arab Civilization*, Centre for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st ed., 1995, p. 44.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 46–47.

⁹ Mohammed Arkoun, "Tolerance and Intolerance in the Islamic Heritage," *Arab Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 3, No. 2, October 1995, pp. 10, 18.

¹⁰ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, Dār Ṣādir, Beirut, Lebanon, 3rd ed., 1414 AH, Vol. 9, pp. 82–83.

¹¹ Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufāḥras li-Alfāz al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, Egyptian Book House, Cairo, Egypt, 1st ed., 1364 AH, pp. 240–241.

¹² Qur'an, Sūrat Fāṭir, verses 27–28.

¹³ Qur'an, Sūrat al-Rūm, verse 22.

¹⁴ Muḥammad al-Tāḥir Ibn 'Ashūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, Tunisian Publishing House, Tunis, 1st ed., 1984, Vol. 21, pp. 74–75.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. 21, pp. 73–74.

¹⁶ Qur'an, Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt, verse 13.

¹⁷ Muḥammad Abū al-Qāsim Ḥājj Ḥamad, *The Intellectual and Civilizational Crisis in the Contemporary Arab Reality*, Dār al-Hādī, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st ed., 2004, p. 148.

¹⁸ Muḥammad Abū al-Qāsim Ḥājj Ḥamad, *The Second Islamic Universality: The Dialectic of the Unseen, Humanity, and Nature*, Dār al-Sāqī, Beirut, Lebanon, 2nd ed., 2012, p. 86.

¹⁹ Qur'an, Sūrat al-Baqarah, verse 148.

²⁰ Qur'an, Sūrat al-Mā'idah, verse 48.

²¹ Qur'an, Sūrat al-Kāfirūn, verse 6.

²² Al-Qurtubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, ed. 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī, Al-Resalah Foundation, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st ed., 2006, Vol. 22, pp. 537–538.

²³ Qur'an, Sūrat al-Baqarah, verse 256.

²⁴ Al-Sa'dī, *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān fī Tafsīr Kalām al-Mannān*, Dār al-Salām Library, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 2nd ed., 2002, p. 110.

²⁵ Qur'an, Sūrat al-Mumtaḥanah, verses 8–9.

²⁶ Al-Qurṭubī, op. cit., Vol. 19, p. 407.

²⁷ Ḥājj Ḥamad, "The Islamization of Knowledge: Concepts and Major Issues," *Tafakkur Journal*, Al Jazirah University, United Arab Emirates, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2001, p. 16.

²⁸ Qur'an, Sūrat al-Mā'idah, verse 48.

²⁹ Ḥājj Ḥamad, *The Qur'an and Social and Historical Transformations*, Dār al-Sāqī, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st ed., 2011, p. 67.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 68.

³¹ Qur'an, Sūrat al-Naḥl, verses 63–64.

³² Ibid., p. 70.

³³ Ibid., p. 72.

³⁴ Qur'an, Sūrat Fāṭir, verse 24.

³⁵ Qur'an, Sūrat Saba', verse 28.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 107.

³⁷ Qur'an, Sūrat al-Ḥijr, verse 9.

³⁸ Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, op. cit., Vol. 14, p. 21.

³⁹ Ḥājj Ḥamad, *The Qur'anic Epistemological Methodology*, previously cited source, pp. 60–61.

⁴⁰ Qur'an, Sūrat al-Naml, verses 91–92.

⁴¹ Ḥājj Ḥamad, *The Qur'an and Social and Historical Transformations*, op. cit., pp. 65–67.

⁴² Ḥājj Ḥamad, *The Second Islamic Universality*, op. cit., p. 426.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 89.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 89.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 80.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 137.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 356.