

Religious Moderation in the Qur'an: A Comparative Study of Tafsir ath-Thabari and Tafsir al-Maraghi

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji konsep moderasi beragama dalam al-Qur'an dengan menggunakan metode komparatif antara tafsir Ath-Thabari (klasik) dan tafsir al-Maraghi (kontemporer). Data penelitian diperoleh melalui studi literatur terhadap sumber primer dan sekunder, sedangkan teknik analisis yang digunakan adalah analisis isi (*content analysis*) dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Fokus penelitian diarahkan pada bagaimana kedua mufasir menafsirkan ayat-ayat moderasi beragama serta relevansinya dalam kehidupan umat Islam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ath-Thabari memahami moderasi sebagai komitmen normatif-teologis terhadap akidah dan syariat dengan penekanan pada aspek tekstual, historis, dan *asbab al-nuzul*. Sementara itu, al-Maraghi menekankan moderasi dalam dimensi sosial-aplikatif dengan menonjolkan toleransi, moralitas, dan relevansi ajaran Islam dalam masyarakat modern yang majemuk. Perbedaan corak penafsiran ini menunjukkan bahwa perspektif klasik dan kontemporer saling melengkapi, sehingga memberikan pemahaman yang lebih komprehensif mengenai nilai moderasi beragama dalam Al-Qur'an. Artikel ini berkontribusi dalam memperkaya khazanah studi tafsir tematik tentang moderasi beragama, khususnya sebagai rujukan akademik dan normatif dalam merespons tantangan ekstremisme, intoleransi, dan keberagaman sosial-keagamaan.

Kata Kunci: *Al-Qur'an, Moderasi Beragama, Tafsir Ath-Thabari, Tafsir al-Maraghi*

Abstract

This study examines the concept of religious moderation in the Qur'an by employing a comparative method between the classical commentary of Ath-Tabari and the contemporary commentary of al-Maraghi. The research data were obtained through a literature review of primary and secondary sources, while the analytical technique used was content analysis with a qualitative approach. The focus of the study is on how the two commentators interpret Qur'anic verses related to religious moderation and their relevance to the lives of Muslims. The findings indicate that Ath-Tabari understands moderation as a normative and

theological commitment to Islamic belief and law, emphasizing textual, historical, and *asbab al-nuzul*. Meanwhile, al-Maraghi emphasizes moderation in a social and practical dimension by highlighting tolerance, morality, and the relevance of Islamic teachings in a pluralistic modern society. These differences in interpretive approaches demonstrate that classical and contemporary perspectives complement one another, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of the value of religious moderation in the Qur'an. This article contributes to enriching the body of thematic Qur'anic interpretation on religious moderation, particularly as an academic and normative reference in responding to the challenges of extremism, intolerance, and socio-religious diversity.

Keywords: *Qur'an, Religious Moderation, Tafsir Ath-Tabari, Tafsir al-Maraghi*

INTRODUCTION

In the modern era, Muslims face significant challenges in maintaining the relevance of religious values amid rapidly changing times. One important issue that has increasingly attracted attention is religious moderation. Religious moderation refers to a perspective, attitude, and pattern of religious practice that is moderate, avoiding both right-wing and left-wing extremism.¹

The term moderation originates from the Latin *moderatio*, meaning restraint or moderation, while in Arabic it is understood as *wasathiyyah*, which signifies justice, balance, and being in the middle. In a religious context, moderation is interpreted as an attitude that avoids both extremism and negligence of religious obligations, emphasizing balance in practicing religious teachings. However, within an increasingly plural global society driven by rapid globalization, religious and ideological diversity often gives rise to conflict, intolerance, and discrimination.² The main problem lies in the weak implementation of the principles of religious moderation, allowing extreme and radical attitudes to dominate the socio-religious sphere and threaten harmony and peace.³

The Qur'an, as the sacred scripture of Islam, provides a strong foundation for the values of moderation in religious life. Many verses emphasize the importance of balance, proportionality, and justice in practicing Islam. The concept of moderation is not limited to ritual worship but also encompasses social, political, economic, and interpersonal dimensions.⁴

¹ Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta Pusat: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian RI, 2019), 10.

² Lukmanul Hakim, et al., "Toleransi dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an: Refleksi terhadap Sinkretisme di Era Modern", *Jurnal Semiotika-Q: Kajian Ilmu Al-Quran Dan Tafsir* 5, no. 2 (2025): 565-582.

³ Nurlaila Radiani, Ris' an Rusli, "Konsep Moderat Dalam Islam Nusantara: Tinjauan Terhadap QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 143", *Jurnal Semiotika-Q: Kajian Ilmu Al-Quran Dan Tafsir* 2, no. 1 (2021): 116-130.

⁴ Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama*, 12.

The term “religious moderation” refers to perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors in practicing religion without excess. What is moderated is not the religious teachings themselves, but rather the way humans understand and implement them. Every religion, including Islam, fundamentally promotes peace, tolerance, and balance in life. Therefore, religious attitudes that are excessively rigid or overly permissive should be avoided and aligned with moderate principles.⁵

Nevertheless, the understanding of religious moderation is not singular. Various Qur’anic commentaries, both classical and modern, offer different interpretations. Ath-Tabari’s commentary, as a classical example, emphasizes textual and historical aspects, as well as the importance of understanding the context of revelation (*asbabun nuzul*) in uncovering the intended meaning of the verses.⁶ Meanwhile, al-Maraghi interprets moderation more broadly and contextually, encompassing spiritual, intellectual, and social dimensions that are relevant to modern society.

These differing approaches highlight the significance of comparative studies aimed at exploring the continuity and relevance of the concept of religious moderation across historical periods, while simultaneously reinforcing an Islamic foundation capable of responding to contemporary challenges such as extremism, intolerance, and identity crises within the Muslim community.

Several previous studies have addressed this topic. Among them, Arif Budiono, in his article “*Religious Moderation in the Qur’anic Perspective (A Study of the Interpretation of QS. al-Baqarah: 143)*”, argues that Muslims are regarded as the best community insofar as they uphold truth and avoid falsehood, demonstrating a moderate attitude that reflects Islam as a peaceful and tolerant religion.⁷ Muhammad Ali Habsyi, in his study “*Strengthening Religious Moderation in Preventing Radicalization in the Digital Era*”, emphasizes that *wasatiyyah* represents justice in religious practice by positioning truth proportionally and avoiding all forms of extremism.⁸ Ahmad Izzan, through his research “*Shifts in the Interpretation of Religious Moderation According to Tafsir al-Azhar and Tafsir al-Misbah*”, identifies a transition from a school-based theological approach toward a more humanistic perspective. Hamka tends to maintain a classical outlook, whereas Quraish Shihab

⁵ Muhammad Quraish Shihab, *Islam Inklusif: Menuju Sikap Moderat Dalam Beragama* (Bandung: Mizan, 2018), 45.

⁶ Al-Tabari, *Jami’ Al-Bayan Fi Ta’wil Al-Qur’an*, I (Beirut: Dar Al-Fikr, 1997), 28.

⁷ Arif Budiono, “Moderasi Beragama Dalam Perspektif Al Quran (Kajian Tafsir Surat Al Baqoroh:143),” *JADID: Journal of Quranic Studies and Islamic Communication* 1, no. 1 (2021): 105–12, <https://ejournal.unkafa.ac.id/index.php/JADID/article/view/336>.

⁸ Muhammad Ali Habsyi, *Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Dalam Mencegah Radikalisasi Di Era Digital* (Yogyakarta: Pusat Kajian Moderasi Beragama, 2024), 42.

demonstrates greater openness to diversity in line with Indonesia's pluralistic national context.⁹

Muhammad Syachrofi et al., in the article "*Religious Moderation from the Perspective of Ahmad al-Shawi*", examine the interpretation of Qur'an 2:143 in Tafsir al-Shawi and conclude that moderation constitutes an essential value within the comprehensive framework of Islamic teachings. They argue that the term *ummatan wasathan* in Qur'an 2:143 refers to individuals who embody moderation through several defining characteristics, namely justice, noble character, knowledge, and the practice of that knowledge.¹⁰ Similarly, the study entitled "*The Concept of Religious Moderation in the Interpretation of Qur'an 2:143 (A Comparative Study of Tafsir Ibn Kathir and Tafsir al-Misbah)*" by Siti Nur Wakhidah et al. (2024) reveals that Ibn Kathir interprets *ummatan wasathan* as "the chosen or best community," whereas Tafsir al-Misbah understands it as "the middle path" or a balanced position.¹¹

Against this scholarly backdrop, the present study, "*Principles of Religious Moderation in the Qur'an (A Comparative Study of Tafsir Ath-Tabari and Tafsir al-Maraghi)*", seeks to examine the principle of *wasatiyyah* through a comparative analysis of two Qur'anic commentaries that differ in historical period, methodological orientation, and intellectual background. Tafsir Ath-Tabari represents a classical, transmission-based approach grounded in authoritative chains of narration, while Tafsir al-Maraghi reflects a modern, more rational and contextual interpretive style. This comparison reveals the continuity and enduring relevance of Islamic values of moderation from the early scholars to contemporary thinkers.

The urgency of this research lies in its contribution to enriching the literature on religious moderation based directly on authoritative Qur'anic exegesis. Amid the rise of extremism and religious polarization, this study strengthens the understanding of a moderate Islam that is tolerant, inclusive, and balanced. Furthermore, its findings are expected to be beneficial for religious education, preaching, and the advancement of Indonesia's Religious Moderation program, ensuring that moderate Islamic teachings remain relevant and applicable in addressing global challenges.

⁹ Ahmad Izzan, *Pergeseran Penafsiran Moderasi Beragama Menurut Tafsir Al-Azhar Dan Al-Misbah* (Jakarta: Pusat Penelitian dan Pengkajian Moderasi Beragama, 2022), 58.

¹⁰ Muhammad Syachrofi and Alby Saidy El Alam, "Moderasi Beragama Perspektif Ahmad Al-Shawi: Telaah Atas Penafsiran QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 143 Dalam Tafsir Al-Shawi," *Al-Wasatiyah: Journal of Religious Moderation* 2, no. 1 (2023): 95–115, <https://doi.org/10.30631/jrm.v2i1.27>.

¹¹ Siti Nur Wakhidah, "Konsep Moderasi Beragama Dalam Penafsiran Qs. Al-Baqarah : 143 (Studi Komparatif Tafsir Ibnu Kaşir Dan Tafsir Al-Misbah)," *El-Maqra' Tafsir, Hadis Dan Teologi* 4, no. 1 (2024): 1–23.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method employed in this study is a comparative method with a qualitative approach. This research compares the commentaries of Ath-Tabari and al-Maraghi in order to identify the principles of religious moderation in the Qur'an. The comparative method is used to examine similarities and differences between two or more facts or characteristics of the objects under study based on a specific conceptual framework. Through this method, researchers are able to seek fundamental explanations of cause-and-effect relationships by analyzing the factors that give rise to particular phenomena, comparing interrelated variables, and determining their similarities and differences.¹²

The data analysis technique applied in this study is qualitative content analysis, which aims to explore the meanings and conceptual understandings of religious moderation as interpreted by two Qur'anic commentators from different historical periods and intellectual backgrounds.¹³ Data derived from Qur'anic verses relevant to the theme of moderation are examined in depth through a comparative analysis of interpretations found in Tafsir Ath-Tabari as a representative of classical exegesis and Tafsir al-Maraghi as a representative of modern exegesis. This analysis includes the identification of similarities and differences in interpretation, historical context, exegetical methodology, and the implications of these understandings of moderation for religious life.

In this comparative study, the author analyzes how both Tafsir Ath-Tabari and Tafsir al-Maraghi conceptualize religious moderation. The primary focus of the research is to examine how classical and contemporary interpretations articulate the principles of moderation and how these interpretations influence the understanding and application of Islamic teachings in society. This comparison provides deeper insight into both the convergences and divergences between the two commentaries in their approaches to religious moderation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Religious Moderation

The term *moderation* originates from the English word *moderation*, which refers to an attitude of being in the middle or avoiding excess. Relatedly, the term *moderator* denotes a mediator, discussion leader, or peacemaker. In the Indonesian

¹² Aditya Wiranda, "Studi Komparatif Antara Penggunaan Qr Qris Dan Kotak Infaq Dalam Berinfak Di Masjid Daarussalaam Griya Tugu Asri, Kecamatan Cimanggis, Kota Depok, Jawa Barat," *Jurnal Indragiri Penelitian Multidisiplin* 2, no. 3 (2022): 169, <https://doi.org/10.58707/jipm.v2i3.293>.

¹³ Abdul Khaliq, Sobihatun Nur Abdul Salam, Muhammad Sai, "Pemahaman QS. al-Mumtahanah Ayat 8-9 dan Relevansinya dengan Hubungan antar Umat Beragama di Indonesia", *Jurnal Semiotika-Q: Kajian Ilmu al-Quran dan Tafsir* 4, no. 2 (2024): 577-588.

Dictionary (KBBI), moderation is defined as an effort to avoid violence and extreme attitudes. The term is derived from the word *moderate*, which describes a tendency to refrain from excessive attitudes or actions. Therefore, when combined into the concept of *religious moderation*, it refers to an approach to practicing religion that avoids extreme perspectives and behaviors.¹⁴

Terminologically, religious moderation refers to an attitude and effort that places religious teachings as the primary foundation for avoiding extremism and radicalism. This concept also emphasizes the importance of seeking a middle ground that can unite various elements of social, national, and state life in Indonesia. In another sense, religious moderation is understood as a moderate way of viewing and practicing religion—namely, understanding and implementing religious teachings in a balanced manner, without adopting extreme or radical positions. Religious radicalism itself is a rigid ideology that arises from narrow religious interpretations and often leads to intolerance toward differences. Therefore, religious moderation is viewed as a wise and constructive approach to fostering inclusive religious attitudes amid social challenges and ideological pressures.¹⁵

Fundamental Principles of Religious Moderation

Moderation, also referred to as *wasatiyyah*, represents a middle path in viewing various aspects of life and is regarded as the best approach positioned between two extreme viewpoints that exceed proper limits. Religious moderation is defined as a way of practicing religion that is neither extreme nor excessive in implementing religious teachings, and those who practice it are described as moderate individuals.¹⁶ The concept of *wasatiyyah* is closely related in meaning to *tawassuth* (middle position), *i'tidal* (justice), and *tawazun* (balance).

Religious moderation emphasizes the importance of balance in understanding and practicing religious teachings. Lukman Hakim Saifuddin stresses that religious moderation does not mean diminishing religious values, but rather ensuring that religious practices do not exceed proper limits and remain relevant to social and cultural contexts. The fundamental principle of religious moderation is being “just and balanced,” encompassing equilibrium across various aspects of religious life. Moderation does not entail moderating the religious doctrines themselves, but rather moderating the way religion is practiced so as to avoid extremes, whether excessively rigid or overly permissive. Thus, justice and

¹⁴ Hidayat Rahmat, “Toleransi Dan Moderasi Beragama,” *GUAU Jurnal Pendidikan Profesi Guru Agama Islam* 2 (2022): 51.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁶ Kementrian Agama RI, *Tanya Jawab Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta Selatan: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementrian Agama RI, 2009), 1–2.

balance serve as the primary foundations for thinking, behaving, and acting as religious individuals living in a pluralistic society.¹⁷

The principle of justice in the context of religious moderation means placing things proportionally and fairly, without bias. Justice involves avoiding excess in both understanding and practicing religious teachings, as well as providing fair space for the existence of others with different beliefs. Lukman emphasizes that religious communities should adopt a fair-minded approach when assessing issues, particularly in responding to diversity and differences. This sense of justice extends beyond personal conduct to the social sphere, including fair treatment of minorities and preventing domination by certain groups in the name of religion.¹⁸

Meanwhile, the principle of balance refers to maintaining harmony among various aspects of religious life. A moderate individual balances text and context, individual interests and collective welfare, as well as spiritual worship and social responsibility. In practice, this principle is reflected in one's ability to remain firmly committed to religious values while remaining open to diversity, scientific progress, and the demands of the times. Balance also implies avoiding overly rigid interpretations of religious teachings while not being so permissive as to depart from the core framework of the religion itself.¹⁹

The principles of justice and balance are highly relevant in Indonesia's pluralistic religious context.²⁰ By adhering to these principles, religious communities can contribute to the creation of a peaceful, tolerant, and diversity-respecting social order. Religious moderation is not exclusive to any single religion; rather, it is a universal approach that can serve as a bridge for interfaith harmony. Therefore, understanding and applying the principles of justice and balance in daily life is essential for strengthening social cohesion and preserving national unity.

Religious moderation also includes the principle of *tasammuh* (tolerance). In Arabic lexicography, *tasammuh* derives from the root *samah* or *samahah*, which conveys meanings of generosity, forgiveness, ease, and peace. Etymologically, *tasammuh* means to accept lightly or to tolerate, while terminologically it refers to tolerance, openness, and acceptance of differences.²¹

Biography of Imam Ath-Tabari

The full name of Ibn Jarir Ath-Tabari is Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Yazid ibn Khalid Ath-Tabari, although other variations are also recorded, such as Muhammad

¹⁷ RI, 19.

¹⁸ RI, 20.

¹⁹ RI, 20.

²⁰ Nanda Riswanda Pohan, et al., "Pluralisme dan Implikasinya terhadap Moderasi Beragama: Analisis Tafsir Tematik", *Jurnal Semiotika-Q: Kajian Ilmu Al-Quran Dan Tafsir* 4, no. 1 (2024): 492-502.

²¹ Kementerian Agama RI, *Gerak Langkah Pendidikan Islam Untuk Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta Pusat: Direktorat Pendidikan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam, 2019), 14.

ibn Jarir ibn Yazid ibn Kathir ibn Ghalib Ath-Thalibi, or Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Yazid ibn Kasir al-Muli Ath-Tabari. He is widely known by the honorific Abu Ja'far Ath-Tabari. He was born in Amul, a city in the province of Tabaristan, in 224 AH/838 CE, although some sources mention 225 AH/839 CE as his year of birth. He spent most of his life in Baghdad, where he passed away in 310 AH/923 CE on a Saturday, and was buried the following day, Sunday, 4 Shawwal 310 AH, at his residence.²²

From an early age, Ath-Tabari demonstrated an extraordinary passion for knowledge, particularly in the Islamic sciences. He memorized the Qur'an at the age of seven, began recording hadith at the age of nine, and undertook scholarly journeys at a young age to study with prominent scholars of his time.²³

Ath-Tabari traveled extensively to centers of learning such as Rayy, Kufah, Basrah, Wasit, Baghdad, and Egypt. During these journeys, he studied under numerous renowned scholars from different legal schools and intellectual traditions, including students of Imam al-Shafi'i and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal. Although he initially followed various legal schools, Ath-Tabari eventually developed his own school of jurisprudence, which did not survive long after his death.

One of Ibn Jarir Ath-Tabari's most monumental contributions to Qur'anic exegesis is his work *Jami' al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. This commentary is widely recognized as one of the most comprehensive and authoritative classical tafsirs and serves as a primary reference for exegetes employing the transmitted (tradition-based) method. In composing this work, Ath-Tabari relied heavily on the interpretations of the Companions, the Successors, and the generation following them, frequently comparing differing opinions before selecting the most convincing one. Scholars of Qur'anic exegesis unanimously agree that no other tafsir equals this work in its depth, rigor, and scholarly significance.²⁴

Biography of al-Maraghi

Ahmad Mustafa al-Maraghi was an Egyptian Muslim scholar, Qur'anic exegete, and intellectual born in the town of al-Maraghah, Sohag Province, Egypt, in 1881 CE. He is recognized as one of the leading reformist figures in Qur'anic interpretation in the twentieth century, known for his rational and contextual approach. He pursued his education at al-Azhar University in Cairo and emerged

²² Eko Zulfikar, "Memperjelas Epistemologi Tafsir Bi Al-Ma'tsur (Aplikasi Contoh Penafsiran Dalam Jami' al-Bayan Karya al-Thabari)", *Jurnal At-Tibyan: Jurnal Ilmu Alqur'an dan Tafsir* 4, no. 1 (2019): 120-142.

²³ Ummu Wahdah, "Karakteristik Wanita Shalihah dalam Surah An-Nisa' Ayat 34: Analisis Penafsiran Ath-Tabari dan Relevansinya dalam Konteks Kekinian", *Jurnal Semiotika-Q: Kajian Ilmu al-Quran dan Tafsir* 4, no. 2 (2024): 631-645.

²⁴ Manna Khali Al-Qatthan, *Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Quran*, 3rd ed. (Litera Antar Nusa, 1996), 527.

as a prominent scholar actively engaged in education, Islamic law, and socio-political affairs.²⁵

Al-Maraghi served as Rector of al-Azhar University and as a judge in Sharia courts in several Egyptian cities. He also played a significant role in reforming Islamic education and sought to integrate religious sciences with modern disciplines. In his scholarly works, al-Maraghi demonstrated intellectual courage by employing scientific and rational approaches to understanding the Qur'an while remaining firmly grounded in classical Islamic principles.

His most notable work is *Tafsir al-Maraghi*, a complete thirty-volume Qur'anic commentary written in clear and accessible language, rich in moral, social, and contextual insights relevant to modern life. This tafsir has gained widespread popularity among students and academics due to its inclusive, moderate, and problem-solving presentation of Islamic teachings in response to contemporary societal challenges.²⁶

Interpretations of Imam Ath-Tabari and al-Maraghi on Religious Moderation

1. *Tawassuth* (The Principle of the Middle Path)

QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 143:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا ۖ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ ۚ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ ۚ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِلَّ إِيْمَانَكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

*"Thus We have made you a middle community so that you may be witnesses over humanity and that the Messenger may be a witness over you. We did not appoint the direction of prayer which you formerly observed except to make evident who follows the Messenger and who turns back on his heels. Indeed, it was difficult, except for those whom God has guided. And God would never let your faith go to waste. Truly, God is Most Compassionate and Most Merciful to humankind."*²⁷

Imam al-Tabari explains his interpretation of Qur'an 2:143 as follows: God — Glorified and Exalted — states, "Thus We have made you a middle community," just as He guided you, the believers, through the sending of Muhammad, peace be upon him, and through what he conveyed to you from God. God has chosen and favored you over other religious communities by making you a middle community. Al-

²⁵ Abd Muqit, "Hukum Dan Rukhsah Puasa Dalam Perspektif Fakhrudin Al-Razi Dan Musthafa Al-Maraghi: Studi Interpretasi Dengan Pendekatan Tafsir Ahkam", *Jurnal Semiotika-Q: Kajian Ilmu Al-Quran Dan Tafsir* 3, no. 2 (2023): 323-342.

²⁶ Hamzah Hamzah and Hilmi Hilmi, "Biografi Singkat Dan Penafsiran Al-Maraghi Terhadap Ayat-Ayat Interaksi Sosial," *Hikami: Jurnal Ilmu Alquran Dan Tafsir* 2, no. 1 (2022): 50, <https://doi.org/10.59622/jiat.v2i1.49>.

²⁷ Tim Penyempurnaan Terjemahan Al-Qur'an, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya* (Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an, Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019), 28-29.

Tabari clarifies that the term *ummah* refers to a generation or collective of humankind. As for the term *wasat* in Arabic usage, it denotes that which is chosen and distinguished. It is said, "So-and-so is the chosen one among his people," and it is also said, "He is the mediator among his people," meaning that he occupies a central position within his lineage and holds the highest rank in honor among his community. Thus, he is described as one who stands in the middle of his people or generation.

Al-Tabari further states that the word *wasat* in this verse signifies that which lies between two extremes. He argues that God describes the Muslim community as "middle" due to their moderation in religion. They are neither excessive nor extreme, like the Christians who exaggerated in their beliefs regarding Jesus, nor are they negligent or lax in religious matters, like the Jews who altered God's scripture, killed their prophets, lied about God, and disbelieved in Him. Rather, Muslims occupy a balanced position. God characterizes them in this way because the deeds most beloved by Him are those performed in proper measure. The interpretation of this verse indicates that "the middle" signifies justice, and justice, in turn, is the essence of being chosen, for the chosen are those who are most just.²⁸

Ahmad Mustafa al-Maraghi explains that Muslims are described as *ummatan wasatan*, meaning a community that follows the middle path and does not incline toward either left-wing or right-wing extremism. The principle of *tawassuth* emphasizes the importance of balance and justice in practicing Islamic teachings. Accordingly, Muslims are required to maintain a moderate, fair, and non-excessive attitude in religious life. By embodying *wasatiyyah*, Muslims are expected to serve as role models for other communities in terms of balance and justice, while avoiding fanaticism and extremism that could undermine social and religious harmony.

Furthermore, al-Maraghi stresses that religious moderation is not merely a matter of tolerance, but also entails a deep understanding and comprehensive application of Islamic teachings in a balanced manner in everyday life. The principle of *tawassuth* encourages Muslims to maintain harmony between worldly and spiritual dimensions of life by avoiding extreme attitudes that may lead to harm and destruction. Therefore, moderation becomes a key principle for internalizing Islamic teachings in a holistic manner, ensuring their alignment with the values of justice and simplicity emphasized in Islam.²⁹

2. *Tawazun* (Balance)

QS. al-Hadid [57]: 25:

²⁸ Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir Ath-Thabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan Fi Ta'wil Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Yayasan ar-Risalah, 2000), 6-8.

²⁹ Ahmad Mustofa Al-Maraghi, *Tafsir Al-Maraghi* (Semarang: Toha Putra, 1987), 68-70.

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ ۖ وَأَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَنَافِعٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَن يَنْصُرُهُ وَرُسُلَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ

"Indeed, We sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and We sent down with them the Scripture and the Balance so that people may uphold justice. And We sent down iron, in which there is great strength and benefits for people, and so that God may make evident those who support Him and His messengers unseen. Truly, God is Powerful and Mighty."³⁰

In his interpretation of this verse, Imam al-Tabari explains that God sent the messengers and revealed His scriptures accompanied by clear proofs and the *mizan* (balance) so that humanity might live according to the principles of justice and balance in all aspects of life. This balance is not limited to the legal sphere alone but also serves as a symbol of moderation—namely, avoiding excess (*ifrat*) and negligence (*tafrit*) in religious practice. Al-Tabari emphasizes that *al-mizan* represents justice and a straight measure, which functions as the foundation for carrying out divine commands and prohibitions in a balanced and non-extreme manner. Accordingly, the principle of moderation (*wasatiyyah*) in Islam finds strong grounding in this verse, as it is rooted in *tawazun* (balance) between spiritual strength (the scripture) and physical strength (iron), between values and actions, between worship and social transactions, and between idealism and realism. Thus, the revelation of *al-mizan* symbolizes a divine command to live justly, proportionally, and harmoniously, which constitutes the essence of Islamic moderation.³¹

Therefore, Ath-Tabari's interpretation of this verse demonstrates that Islamic teachings were revealed to establish a social order that is just, balanced, and peaceful. Religious moderation is reflected in the principles of *i'tidal* (justice), *tawazun* (balance), and *tasamuh* (tolerance), all of which align with the Qur'anic messages of justice. Ath-Tabari's exegesis provides a strong foundation for understanding that Islam is not an extreme or coercive religion, but one that places everything in its proper proportion, upholds justice, and is oriented toward the welfare of all humanity.

Ahmad Mustafa al-Maraghi, in his interpretation of QS. al-Hadid [57]: 25, emphasizes the importance of the principle of balance (*tawazun*) in the life of the Muslim community. The verse states that God revealed His scriptures and the balance (*mizan*) so that people may uphold justice (*qist*). Al-Maraghi explains that *mizan* is not merely a physical measuring instrument, but a symbol of justice that

³⁰ Al-Qur'an, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya*, 11.

³¹ Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir Ath-Thabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan Fi Ta'wil Al-Qur'an*, vol. 27 (Beirut: Yayasan ar-Risalah, 2000), 235–38.

must be applied across all dimensions of life, both worldly and spiritual. Thus, *tawazun* entails maintaining equilibrium between worldly and hereafter-oriented concerns, between physical and spiritual needs, and between individual interests and communal responsibilities.³²

This principle of *tawazun* is closely related to the concept of religious moderation. Religious moderation teaches Muslims to avoid both excess (*ifrat*) and deficiency (*tafrit*) in practicing their faith. Instead, Muslims are encouraged to adopt a just and balanced attitude, to preserve harmony between worldly life and the hereafter, and to respect diversity within society. By applying the principle of *tawazun*, Muslims can foster a just, peaceful, and harmonious society in accordance with the moderate and inclusive teachings of Islam.

3. *I'tidal* (Uprightness and Justice)

QS. al-Maidah [5]: 8:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ۖ اعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

*"O you who believe! Stand firmly for justice for the sake of God, bearing witness with fairness. And do not let hatred toward a people cause you to deviate from justice. Be just, for justice is closer to piety. And be mindful of God; indeed, God is All-Aware of what you do."*³³

Ibn Jarir ath-Tabari, in his interpretation of Qur'an, QS. al-Ma'idah [5]: 8, emphasizes the importance of firm and consistent justice, even toward those who are disliked or opposed. According to ath-Tabari, God commands the believers to always be steadfast upholders of justice solely for the sake of God, not driven by personal desires or group interests. He explains that the prohibition against allowing hatred toward a people to lead to injustice serves as a moral warning for Muslims to maintain ethical integrity in all circumstances. Honesty in attitude and steadfastness in upholding justice are defining characteristics of the pious, and this reflects the principle of uprighteness (*i'tidal*), which balances principle and emotion.³⁴

Ath-Tabari implicitly demonstrates that religious moderation is characterized by justice that does not fluctuate according to emotions or social conditions. In his exegesis, he does not merely elaborate on the textual meaning of the verse, but also highlights its deep ethical and spiritual values rooted in the Islamic concept of justice. Thus, *i'tidal*, meaning uprighteness and firmness, is reflected in the consistent

³² Ahmad Musthafa Al-Maraghi, *Tafsir Al-Maraghi Juz 14* (Semarang: Toha Putra, 1987), 146–48.

³³ Al-Qur'an, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya*, 146.

³⁴ Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir Ath-Thabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan Fi Ta'wil Al-Qur'an*, vol. 8 (Beirut: Yayasan ar-Risalah, 2000), 415.

commitment of Muslims to act justly in all situations, including when confronting enemies or those who provoke hatred. This interpretation shows that Islam rejects all forms of extremism, whether emotional or behavioral, and instead guides its followers to stand firmly in justice as a manifestation of devotion to God.³⁵

In *Tafsir al-Maraghi*, this verse is explained as a very firm command to Muslims to be defenders of truth and justice solely for the sake of God. Al-Maraghi stresses that hatred toward a particular group must never be used as a justification for oppression or injustice, as such behavior contradicts the values of piety. He elaborates that justice must be upheld in every situation, whether in times of peace or conflict. Even toward enemies, a Muslim is not permitted to deviate from the principle of justice. Furthermore, al-Maraghi explains that justice is the core of all religious law and serves as the primary measure of social righteousness. This verse, according to him, instills moral awareness so that Muslims preserve personal integrity when responding to differences and conflicts. The message of this verse strongly aligns with the principle of *i'tidal* (balance and justice) in religious moderation, namely ensuring that religious practice does not become extreme due to blind sentiment, emotion, or hatred. Moderation in Islam is not merely about tolerance, but also about a firm commitment to universal justice without discrimination.³⁶

4. *Tasammuh* (Tolerance)

QS. Thaha [20]: 44:

فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَىٰ

*"So speak to him gently; perhaps he may take heed or fear [God]."*³⁷

Ibn Jarir ath-Tabari, in his interpretation of Qur'an, QS. Taha [20]: 44, explains that God's command to Moses and Aaron to speak gently to Pharaoh represents a method of preaching grounded in gentleness, even when directed toward a figure of extreme tyranny. According to ath-Tabari, the gentle speech referred to in this verse involves the use of polite, respectful, and non-hurtful language, such as addressing him with courteous forms of address or honorific titles, with the hope of touching Pharaoh's heart so that he might become aware or fear God. This demonstrates that the recommended approach to preaching emphasizes ethics, patience, and gentleness rather than violence or coercion. Ath-Tabari further stresses that although God knows that Pharaoh would not believe, the command to continue speaking gently contains an important lesson regarding the principle of tolerance.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 417.

³⁶ Ahmad Musthafa Al-Maraghi, *Tafsir Al-Maraghi*, Juz 6 (Semarang: Toha Putra, 1987), 72-74.

³⁷ Al-Qur'an, *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahannya*, 444.

Preaching is not solely aimed at those who are likely to accept the message, but also constitutes a moral responsibility carried out in the most wise and ethical manner. This reflects a moderate religious attitude, in which truth is conveyed in ways that are accessible to human reason and conscience. Thus, according to ath-Tabari, religious moderation is reflected in the willingness to engage in dialogue, to respect the dignity of one's interlocutor, and to avoid verbal aggression, even toward those who oppose the truth, such as Pharaoh.³⁸

Shaykh Ahmad Musthafa al-Maraghi, in his *Tafsir al-Maraghi*, explains that God's command to the prophets Moses and Aaron to speak gently to Pharaoh—a ruler notorious for his cruelty—constitutes an important lesson in the ethics of preaching. Although Pharaoh was known for his oppression and even claimed divinity, God nevertheless instructed His prophets to adopt a gentle and non-harsh approach. Al-Maraghi emphasizes that gentleness in conveying the truth is a fundamental element of wise preaching that Islam strongly upholds. He further connects this verse with the effectiveness of religious communication, arguing that a non-confrontational approach has a greater potential to reach the hearts of those being addressed. The hope expressed in the verse, that Pharaoh might reflect or fear God, indicates that gentle preaching can open the door of awareness even in the hardest of hearts. This teaching is closely related to the principles of tolerance and moderation in religious life, which prioritize dialogue, ethical communication, and compassion in fostering human relations. Moderation, in this sense, does not mean compromising principles, but rather conveying them wisely and appropriately.³⁹

Comparative Interpretation of Ath-Tabari and Al-Maraghi on Verses of Religious Moderation

Imam ath-Tabari, in *Jami' al-Bayan*, interprets Qur'an, QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 143, which states that the Muslim community has been made a middle community.⁴⁰ He understands this concept as referring to a community that follows a moderate and balanced path, avoiding extremes in either direction.⁴¹ This interpretation is reinforced through a textual approach and reports from the Companions of the Prophet. Al-Maraghi expands this understanding by emphasizing the role of the Muslim community as a model of balance in matters of belief, worship, and social ethics, capable of serving as an example in the context of modern pluralistic societies.

³⁸ Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir Ath-Thabari, *Jāmi' Al-Bayān Fī Ta'wīl Al-Qur'ān*, vol. 16 (Beirut: Yayasan ar-Risalah, 2000), 132–34.

³⁹ Ahmad Musthafa Al-Maraghi, *Tafsir Al-Maraghi, Juz 16* (Semarang: Toha Putra, 1987), pp. 105–106.

⁴⁰ Tim Penyempurnaan Terjemahan Al-Qur'an, *Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahannya*, hlm. 28–29.

⁴¹ Ath-Thabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan Fī Ta'wīl Al-Qur'an*, 2000.

Accordingly, the concept of moderation is not merely an ideal, but a practical guideline for fostering harmonious coexistence within diverse communities.

Imam ath-Tabari, in *Jami' al-Bayan*, interprets Qur'an, QS. al-Hadid [57]: 25 through a textual approach supported by reports from the Companions, viewing the *mizan* (scale) as a symbol of justice that must be upheld in society as part of divine ordinance. For him, the principle of *tawazzun* (balance) constitutes a normative order established by God, which obliges Muslims to maintain justice in fulfilling rights and obligations. Meanwhile, al-Maraghi, in his tafsir, emphasizes a broader understanding of balance, namely balancing worldly and hereafter-oriented concerns, as well as physical and spiritual needs. Employing a rational and contextual approach, he presents *tawazzun* as a foundational principle for building a harmonious and moderate social life.

In interpreting Qur'an, QS. al-Ma'idah [5]: 8, which underscores the necessity of justice even toward those who are disliked, ath-Tabari stresses that justice is an absolute command from God that must not be compromised by emotional impulses or hatred. His interpretation relies heavily on transmitted reports and the views of the Companions. Al-Maraghi, on the other hand, highlights justice as a manifestation of piety and as the foundation of healthy social relations within a pluralistic society. According to al-Maraghi, this verse teaches Muslims to avoid falling into extreme attitudes driven by animosity, and instead to remain proportional, ethical, and dignified in their conduct.

When interpreting Qur'an, QS. Taha [20]: 44, both exegetes agree that the approach to preaching must be characterized by gentleness. Ath-Tabari situates this interpretation within the framework of prophetic ethics, emphasizing civility and courtesy in conveying the message of Islam, even to the most obstinate adversaries such as Pharaoh. Al-Maraghi adds a psychological dimension, arguing that gentleness in preaching possesses a stronger capacity to touch the human heart and open possibilities for transformation. This approach is therefore closely aligned with the principles of tolerance and the middle path in religious moderation.⁴²

Based on the comparative analysis, it becomes evident that although both ath-Tabari and al-Maraghi emphasize religious moderation, they employ different interpretive approaches. Ath-Tabari's tafsir places greater emphasis on historical and textual understanding, extracting the foundational values of Islamic teachings within the context of the Prophet Muhammad's era. In contrast, al-Maraghi's tafsir prioritizes the relevance of Islamic teachings in contemporary social contexts, linking them to the challenges of modernity, pluralism, and dynamic social life.

⁴² Ahmad Musthafa Al-Maraghi, *Tafsir Al-Maraghi, Juz 16* (Semarang: Toha Putra, 1987), pp. 105-106.

Both exegetes agree that religious moderation is a fundamental principle in Islam. However, al-Maraghi provides greater space for the practical application of these moderate values in social life by stressing the importance of adapting to the changing conditions of the time. Consequently, al-Maraghi's tafsir may be regarded as more responsive to the challenges faced by Muslims in the modern world, while ath-Tabari's tafsir offers a solid foundation in the textual and historical understanding of Islamic teachings that remains indispensable.

The following is a comparative table of interpretations between Ath-Tabari and Al-Maraghi:

No	Aspect of Moderation	Verse	Ath-Tabari's Interpretation	Ath-Tabari's Interpretation
1	<i>Tawassuth</i> (Moderation)	QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 143	Ath-Tabari interprets <i>ummatan wasathan</i> as a just and chosen community, positioned between excess and negligence. The term <i>wasath</i> signifies excellence, as the middle position is regarded as the most ideal and balanced.	Al-Maraghi understands <i>ummatan wasathan</i> as a community that is moderate in creed, worship, and social dealings. He emphasizes that Muslims are neither extreme like some of the People of the Book nor neglectful like idol worshippers; rather, Islam presents a balance between the spiritual and the material.
2	<i>Tawazzun</i> (Balance)	QS. Al-Hadid [57]: 25	Ath-Tabari interprets this verse as indicating that Allah sent down the Book and the Balance so that humanity may uphold justice, with iron serving as a symbol of balance between power and justice. This reflects the importance of proportionality in the enforcement of law.	Al-Maraghi emphasizes that the verse highlights the necessity of maintaining balance between revelation and physical power (iron), urging the community to preserve harmony between military strength and spiritual values.
3	<i>I'tidal</i> (Uprightness and Justice)	QS. Al-Maidah [5]: 8	According to Ath-Tabari, this verse affirms Allah's command to uphold justice even toward those who are disliked. Justice	Al-Maraghi explains that the verse is a call for moral consistency and universal justice – impartial and

			is an integral part of piety and must not be compromised by emotion or hostility.	not swayed by hatred. The principle of uprightness serves as the foundation of life.
4	<i>Tasammuh</i> (Tolerance)	QS. Thaha [20]: 44	Ath-Tabari interprets Allah’s command to Moses and Aaron to speak gently to Pharaoh as a form of wisdom and prudent preaching, even toward an oppressor. The purpose is to open the heart of the addressee.	Al-Maraghi emphasizes the importance of speaking with tolerance and gentleness, even to opponents. He views this as a fundamental principle of tolerance in conveying the truth peacefully and courteously.

Table 1. Comparative Interpretation of Ath-Tabari and Al-Maraghi on Religious Moderation

The Relevance of Religious Moderation in the Contemporary Context

Both interpretations – those of Ath-Tabari and al-Maraghi – offer important insights for responding to contemporary challenges, in which pluralism, radicalization, and extremism are increasingly prevalent. Religious moderation, as articulated in these tafsir works, provides guidance for Muslims to remain on the right path, maintain harmony amid diversity, and prioritize peace and tolerance.

The concept of religious moderation is highly relevant, particularly in facing the challenges of modernity that bring rapid social, political, and economic changes. Teachings on religious moderation, whether found in classical or contemporary tafsir, offer a conceptual framework that helps Muslims remain relevant and contribute positively to an increasingly pluralistic global society.⁴³

Ath-Tabari’s interpretation, which emphasizes balance (*tawazzun*), justice (*i’tidal*), and gentleness (*tasamuh*) as normative values, provides a strong foundation showing that Islam teaches its followers to avoid extremism and fanaticism that may lead to division. In an era marked by social polarization and identity-based conflicts, these teachings of moderation highlight the importance of preserving unity, respecting differences, and upholding justice without being driven by sentiments of hatred.

Meanwhile, al-Maraghi’s more contextual and applicative tafsir adapts these values of moderation to the challenges of modern life, such as cultural, religious, and intellectual diversity. A gentle, just, and balanced approach to da’wah becomes

⁴³ Aftonur Rosyad, Eko Zulfikar, “The Concept of Religious Pluralism in The Quran: An Analysis of Maqashidi Exegesis in the Indonesian Context”, *Dialogia* 20, no. 1 (2022): 150-175.

an effective strategy for fostering dialogue and cooperation among religious communities and social groups. Religious moderation, understood as an inclusive and rational way of life, is highly relevant for countering radicalism, intolerance, and extremism that often arise from ignorance and prejudice.

Practically, both tafsir works provide theological and moral foundations for contemporary Muslims to practice their religion in a moderate, just, and tolerant manner, while also serving as agents of peace and harmony in plural societies. The key message is that moderation is not merely a passive attitude or a compromise devoid of principles, but an active effort to maintain balance between faith, ethics, and the dynamic realities of social life.

CLOSING

The principles of religious moderation in the Qur'an are reflected through the values of *tawassuth* (the middle path), *tawazzun* (balance), *i'tidal* (uprightness and justice), and *tasamuh* (tolerance). Both Ath-Tabari and Al-Maraghi emphasize the importance of these principles, albeit from different perspectives. Ath-Tabari, through a textual approach grounded in transmitted reports (*riwayat*), understands *tawassuth* as adherence to the middle path in Islamic law without falling into extremism; *tawazzun* as balance between obedience to God and social relations; *i'tidal* as a firm and consistent commitment to divine law; and *tasamuh* as a form of limited tolerance that remains within the boundaries of Islamic principles. In contrast, Al-Maraghi, employing a contextual and rational approach, offers interpretations that are more applicative and relevant to modern realities: *tawassuth* as mediation amid differences, *tawazzun* as harmony between worldly and hereafter-oriented concerns, *i'tidal* as proportional justice, and *tasamuh* as openness toward religious plurality. Thus, Ath-Tabari places greater emphasis on the normative dimension, while Al-Maraghi highlights the social and applicative aspects. Together, their interpretations complement one another in presenting an understanding of religious moderation that is not merely theoretical but also practical, making it highly relevant for fostering a peaceful and harmonious religious life within pluralistic societies.

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