



SHAHRASTANI'S EXPOSITION OF JUDAISM IN *AL-MILAL WA AL-NIHAL* IN THE LIGHT OF COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

Abdullah Muslich Rizal Maulana*, Syamsul Hadi Untung,
M. Adib Fuadi Nuriz, Asep Awaludin,

Khoffifa Assakhyyu Qorib

University of Darussalam Gontor

*Correspondence email: amrizalm@unida.gontor.ac.id

Abstract: This article aimed to offer a closer comprehension concerning Judaism in the work of Abū al-Fath Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Ahmad al-Shahrastānī's (d. 1153) work in the study of religions, *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*. Employing content and document analysis methods, this research goes over the framework of Comparative Theology, advancing further perspectives and considerations of Islamic-Jewish relations built within medieval Islamic literature. This research concluded that the employment of Comparative Theology as a framework led to an enhancement of reading the content of *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, involving a novel procedure to develop the dialogue between Islam and other religions through the schema of 'Commitment' and 'Openness.' With a particular reference to the research question offered, this research was able to grasp a deeper yet broader cognition of the relevance of Comparative Theology as a cutting-edge perspective concerning the discussion of *Sēpēr Yəšīrā*, *Tanakh*, *aséret ha-dvarim*, and Joshua continued leadership in Judaism about Islam, which, as such, provided an extensive discussion of the study of Islam and Other Religions, particularly on Jews-Islam theological encounters.

Keywords: al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal wa al-Nihal, Comparative Theology, Islamic-Jewish Relations, Islamic-Jewish Dialogue.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v27i2.570>

Introduction

REGARDING THE IMPORTANCE of Islamic-Jewish Relations studies, we can assume several essential considerations in a theological and academic sense. First of all, it is attractive to realize that Islam and Judaism occupy a close association following the known 25 names of prophets in an Islamic tradition; 16 of them were

Israelites.¹ Those names, moreover, participate in a tremendous number of Qur'anic verses. For instance, the Patriarch Abraham (*Ibrāhīm*) was mentioned 69 times, Jacob (*Ya'qūb*) 13 times, and Moses (*Mūsā*) 136 times.² As Roberto (2011) asserted, the existence of these divine descriptions provides the historical background within which the community of believers must consider itself and the prophet Muhammad as concluding and closing the Biblical heritage.³ Accordingly, Pregill (2007) emphasized that those narratives of Biblical prophets in the Qur'an illustrate that the original biblical legacy of ancient Israel continues to flourish and evolve as an intrinsic part of Islam, implying that Muslims, Jews, and Christians must be seen as equal participants in the growth of the biblical inheritance.⁴

It is then quite comprehensible to admit the availability of tremendous interaction of divine heritage and the message within both Judaism and Islam -many times also overlapping with Christianity- including their monotheistic revelation,⁵ figures,⁶ or

¹ Dahlia Lubis et al., "An Eschatological Study of Jerusalem in Biblical and Quranic Literature," *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 29, no. 3 (September 1, 2020): 217–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10656219.2020.1801539>; Abū al-Fidā 'Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr, *Qaṣṣāṣ Al-Anbiyā'* (Makkah: Maktabah al-Thalib al-Jamī'i, 1988).

² Muhammad Fuād 'Abd al-Bāqī, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras Li Alfāz al-Qur`ān al-Karīm* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Misriyya, 1944), 1–2, 680–82, 773.

³ Roberto Tottoli, *Biblical Prophets in the Qur'an and Muslim Literature* (London: Routledge, 2001), xi, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203037256>.

⁴ Michael E. Pregill, "The Hebrew Bible and the Quran: The Problem of the Jewish 'Influence' on Islam," *Religion Compass* 1, no. 6 (2007): 643–59, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2007.00044.x>.

⁵ Amanullah De Sondy, Michelle A. Gonzalez, and William S. Green, *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: An Introduction to Monotheism* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020); Thomas Mooren, "Monotheism Revisited: Islamic Monotheism in Dialogue with Moses Ben Maimon (Maimonides, 1135–1204)," *MST Review* 20, no. 1 (2018): 1–1; Y. Tzvi Langermann, *Monotheism & Ethics: Historical and Contemporary Intersections Among Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (BRILL, 2011).

⁶ Ulrike Bechmann, "Biblical Figures of Women in the Qur'an," in *The Early Middle Ages*, ed. Franca Ela Consolino and Judith Herrin (The Society of Biblical Literature, 2020), 345–76, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv13xpqnt.18>; George Archer, "John, Jesus, and Mary in the Qur'an," in *The Routledge Companion to the Qur'an*, ed. George Archer, Maria M. Dakake, and Daniel A. Madigan (Routledge, 2021).

sacred place,⁷ apart from the Islamic theological foundation's alteration (*tahrif*) of the Jewish text.⁸ In recent findings of particular discourse on the Prophet in Judaism and Islam, it is also compelling to find that Baeq and Kim et. al. (2022) presented their research on prophets who appear in both the Bible and the Qur'an⁹ and Noegel and Wheeler (2010) provide a chronological lexicon for those prophets,¹⁰ Segovia (2015),¹¹ Penchansky (2021),¹² Tottoli and Welle (2021),¹³ and Archer (2021)¹⁴ also seemed interested in sharing their ideas regarding that topic. Overall, it is readily apparent that scholars are currently growing attentively mapping Muslim-Jewish encounters in various aspects, which is particularly related to the sharing and intertwined narrative of prophet personification in both traditions.

This research intended to come into a deeper discussion regarding the description of Judaism in al-Shahrastānī's (d. 1153) *al-Milal wa al-Nihāl* in the framework of Comparative Theology. *Al-*

⁷ Katia Cytryn-Silverman, "The Dome and the Rock Where Adam, Moses, and Jesus Meet" (Leiden: Boston: Brill, 2021), 71–96, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004437210_006.

⁸ M. H. Ananikian, "TAHRIF OR THE ALTERATION OF THE BIBLE ACCORDING TO THE MOSLEMS Abbreviated and Translated from the Bessarione, Xxvi, 1922," *The Muslim World* 14, no. 1 (1924): 61–84, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.1924.tb00497.x>; Navras J. Aafreedi, "Antisemitism in the Muslim Intellectual Discourse in South Asia," *Religions* 10, no. 7 (July 2019): 442, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10070442>; Sarah Stroumsa, "Jewish Polemics Against Islam and Christianity in the Light of Judaeo-Arabic Texts," in *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society* (Routledge, 2004).

⁹ Daniel S. Baeq and Sam Kim, eds., *Prophets in the Qur'an and the Bible* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2022).

¹⁰ Scott B. Noegel, *The A to Z of Prophets in Islam and Judaism* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010), <http://archive.org/details/atozofprophetsin0000noeg>.

¹¹ Carlos A. Segovia, *The Quranic Noah and the Making of the Islamic Prophet: A Study of Intertextuality and Religious Identity Formation in Late Antiquity, The Quranic Noah and the Making of the Islamic Prophet* (De Gruyter, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110405897>.

¹² David Penchansky, *Solomon and the Ant: The Qur'an in Conversation with the Bible* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2021).

¹³ Roberto Tottoli and Jason Welle, "Biblical Prophets: Moses, Joseph, Jonah, and Job," in *The Routledge Companion to the Qur'an*, ed. George Archer, Maria M. Dakake, and Daniel A. Madigan (Routledge, 2021).

¹⁴ Archer, "John, Jesus, and Mary in the Qur'an."

Milal wa al-Nihal was a masterpiece of Islamic medieval work studying religions. Within this field, *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* was quoted in Steven M. Wasserstrom (1988, 2001),¹⁵ David Thomas (2010, 2011),¹⁶ Ian Richard Netton (2013),¹⁷ William Montgomery Watt (2014),¹⁸ Moreover, it has inspired several research in the study of religions.¹⁹ As such, the researchers will use both content and document analysis. The first technique is a kind of textual comprehension used to describe and explain the features of messages hidden in texts to understand religious expressions and identities better. In practice, it will pick, unite, and create content categories to describe the results and provide significant historical and cultural insight into a studied topic.²⁰ Practically, the Content Analysis Method will be a non-intrusive method for scholars to analyze and synthesize massive volumes of information about al-Shahrastānī's *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, Islamic-Jewish Relations and

¹⁵ Steven M. Wasserstrom, "Islamicate History of Religions?," *History of Religions* 27, no. 4 (May 1988): 405–11, <https://doi.org/10.1086/463130>; Steven M. Wasserstrom, "Jewish Sectarianism in the Near East," in *Judaism in Practice*, ed. Lawrence Fine, From the Middle Ages through the Early Modern Period (Princeton University Press, 2001), 229–36, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1ddczxh.23>.

¹⁶ David Thomas and Alexander Mallett, *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Volume 2 (900-1050)* (BRILL, 2010); David Thomas, David Richard Thomas, and Barbara Roggema, *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Volume 3 (1050-1200)* (BRILL, 2011).

¹⁷ Ian Richard Netton, *Encyclopedia of Islamic Civilization and Religion* (Routledge, 2013).

¹⁸ William Montgomery Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounters: Perceptions and Misperceptions* (London: Routledge, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315819624>.

¹⁹ Wasserstrom, "Islamicate History of Religions?"; A. K. Mohd Faizal, Mohamed Fairooz bin Abdul Khir, and A. K. Mohd Fahmi, "Metodologi Al-Shahrastani Dalam Al-Milal Wa Al-Nihal," *Journal of Asian Islamic Higher Institutions* 4, no. 1 (2018), <http://jurnal7.usas.edu.my/index.php/JAIHI/article/view/20>; Muhammad Azizan Sabjan, "Cendekian Heresiografi Awal dalam Perbandingan Agama: Muhammad 'Abd Al-Karim Al-Shahrastani dan Kitabnya, Al-Milal Wa Al-Nihal: Early Heresiographical Scholars in Comparative Religion: Muhammad 'Abd Al-Karim Al-Shahrastani and His al-Milal wa al-Nihal," *'Abqari Journal* 26, no. 1 (April 28, 2022): 79–92, <https://doi.org/10.33102/abqari.vol26no1.403>.

²⁰ Chad Nelson and Jr Woods Robert H., "Content Analysis," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in The Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (London ; New York: Routledge, 2011), 109–10.

Comparative Theology. In addition to that, the document analysis technique will also assist in comprehending *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* based on its creation, function, usage, and substance;²¹ This technique will expand on additional literature relevant to the study topic to evaluate the essential facts supporting James and its significance to Islamic-Jewish Relations.

Conversely, Clooney (2011) defined Comparative Theology as:

"Marks act of faith seeking an understanding which are rooted in a particular faith tradition but which, from that foundation, venture into learning from one or more other faith tradition. This learning is sought for fresh theological insight that is indebted to the newly encountered traditions and the home tradition."²²

It is a relatively young subfield that creatively combines the terms 'comparative' and 'theology' and focuses on theological practices oriented to in-depth interreligious study while being anchored in a particular religious tradition.²³ It involves the theological aspect of other religions because it follows its framework, encounters another faith, and seeks the finer points of every religion.²⁴ Comparative Theology simultaneously encompasses comparison, dialogue, appreciation, and evaluation to enquire about historical recapitulation.²⁵ As Comparative Theology recognizes that each tradition has its history, sources, problems, potentials, and characteristics in each encounter,²⁶ This

²¹ Grace Davie and David Wyatt, "Document Analysis," in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in The Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (London ; New York: Routledge, 2011), 151.

²² Freek L. Bakker, "Comparative Theology: Deep Learning across Religious Borders The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation," *Exchange* 40, no. 3 (2011): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1163/157254311X579659>.

²³ Francis X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 11.

²⁴ Ulrich Winkler, "Reasons for and Contexts of Deep Theological Engagement with Other Religious Traditions in Europe: Toward a Comparative Theology," *Religions* 3 (2012): 9.

²⁵ Ulrich Dehn, "A European (German) View on Comparative Theology: Dialogue with My Own Past," *Religions*, no. 3 (2012): 42.

²⁶ Pim Valkenberg, *A Companion to Comparative Theology : Chapter 3 The Development of Comparative Theology in the Twentieth Century* (BRILL, 2022), 68–89, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004388390>.

practice is carried out effectively in close learning of other religious traditions.²⁷ In the way of Comparative Theology, the researcher is expected to be able to go through the process of "Passing Over" and "Coming Back" -Commitment and Openness- that subsequently demand a longer time than a mere comparison to gain experience and encounter with other religions.²⁸

This research, finally, will attempt to answer an intended research question: "How did Shahrastani expose Judaism in his work *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* following a Comparative Theological framework?"

An Overview Concerning Islam and the Development of the Study of Theology and Religion

Experts agree that Islam has shown a great interest in the topics in a more detailed context of theology and religion since the medieval age, engaging with other faiths and publishing notable works discussed and cited up to a millennium later. Most literature on other religions makes it clear, directly or indirectly, that Islam is the only religion and the genuine alternative to other faiths, whether apologetic, polemical, or ideological. Other religions' books are more descriptive and only judge at the end. Such works may serve new polemical goals but also review medieval perspectives and examine Islam's relationship with other faiths.²⁹ Al-Biruni's (d. 1048) *Tahqīq mā li al-Hind*³⁰ and *al-Athār al-Bāqiyah*,³¹ For instance, it illustrated the magnificent situation of India's religion and was still considered a gem of Indology and

²⁷ Francis X. Clooney, SJ, *Comparative Theology*, vol. 1 (Oxford University Press, 2018), 280–95, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198797852.003.0017>.

²⁸ Marianne Moyaert, "On Vulnerability: Probing the Ethical Dimensions of Comparative Theology," *Religions* 3 (2012): 125.

²⁹ Jacques Waardenburg, "Observations on the Scholarly Study of Religions as Pursued in Some Muslim Countries," *Numen* 45, no. 3 (January 1, 1998): 235–257.

³⁰ Abu al-Rayhān Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Bīrūnī, *Tahqīq Ma Li Al-Hind Min Maqūlah Maqbūlah Fi al-'Aql Aw Mardhūlah* (Beirut: Alam Al Kotob, 1983).

³¹ Abu al-Rayhān Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Bīrūnī, *Al-Athār al-Bāqiyah 'an al-Qurūn al-Khāliyah* (Teheran: Miras Maktoob, 2001).

Hindu studies. Both works are translated and edited by Sachau as *Alberuni's India*³² and *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*.³³

Additional examples from Muslim scholars' works regarding the study of religions are also available in the hand of Ibn Taymiyyah's (1263-1328) *al-Jawāb al-Ṣahīh*.³⁴ The extensive anti-Christian polemical treatise studied in *al-Jawāb* was ostensibly a response to a letter written by a Christian in Cyprus and sent to Muslim scholars in Damascus.³⁵ Ibn Taymiyyah's disciple, Najm al-Din al-Tufi (1276-1316), on the other hand, also wrote *Ta'līq 'alā al-Anājil al-Arba'ah wa al-Tawrah*.³⁶ The work of the Baghidian scholar examining the chapters of 'Prophets' in both the *Tanakh* and New Testament; in the *Tanakh*, al-Tufi commented on the books of Genesis, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Jonah, Habakkuk, and Malachi, while in the New Testament, the four gospels became the main focus.³⁷ Besides those three books, we

³² Abu al-Rayhān Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Bīrūnī, *Alberuni's India. An Account of the Religion, Philosophy, Literature, Geography, Chronology, Astronomy, Customs, Laws and Astrology of India about A.D. 1030*, ed. Eduard Sachau, vol. 1, 2 vols. (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., 1910), <http://archive.org/details/alberunisindiaac01biru>.

³³ Abu al-Rayhān Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Bīrūnī, *The Chronology Of Ancient Nations*, ed. C Edward Sachau (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1879), <http://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.282084>.

³⁴ Abu al-'Abbās Taqīyy al-Dīn Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Halīm ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Jawāb al-Ṣahīh Li Man Baddala Dīn al-Masīh* (Riyadh: Dār al-'Āsimah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 1999); Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Halīm Ibn Taymīyah, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's al-Jawāb al-Ṣahīh*, trans. Thomas F. Michel, *Studies in Islamic Philosophy and Science* (Delmar, N.Y: Caravan Books, 1984).

³⁵ Shahab Ahmed and Yossef Rapoport, *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times* (Karachi: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010), 15; David Thomas, "Apologetic and Polemic in the Letter from Cyprus and Ibn Taymiyya's Jawāb al-Ṣahīh Li-Man Baddala Dīn al-Masīh," in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, by Shahab Ahmed and Yossef Rapoport (Karachi: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010).

³⁶ Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Qawī al-Ṭūfī, *Ta'līq 'Alā al-Anājil al-Arba'Ah Wa Kutub al-Anbiyā' al-Ithnā 'Asyara Min al-Tawrah*, ed. Mūsā ibn Muhammad Ālī Hijād al-Zahrānī (Damascus: Akl Publishing, 2016).

³⁷ Sulaymān ibn 'Abd al-Qawī al-Ṭūfī, *Muslim Exegesis of the Bible in Medieval Cairo: Najm al-Din al-Tufi's (d. 716/1316) Commentary on the Christian Scriptures*, ed. Lejla Demiri, *History of Christian-Muslim Relations*, v. 19 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2013).

can also observe Muslim scholars' literature regarding other religions: Al-Jahiz (d. 868), published *al-Mukhtār fi al-Radd 'alā al-Naṣārā*; ³⁸ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210) wrote *al-Munāzarah fī radd 'alā al-Naṣārā*; ³⁹ Moreover, al-Qarafi (d. 1285), who wrote *al-Ajwibah al-Fākhirah*.⁴⁰

Many other works can still be traced and discussed, including *al-Milal wa al-Nihāl*, as we have to limit our comprehension to this stage considering the frame of the research questions in this paper. Based on those preceding discussions, it is ensured that apart from the different approaches in surveying their neighbors, a dialogue-oriented approach toward practitioners of different faiths may result in better knowledge and stimulate studying other religions.⁴¹ In conclusion, Islamic civilization has created a suitable environment for developing theology and religious studies since the medieval age. Grunebaum (1946), at the time he reviewed Muslim-Middle Ages cultural orientation, contended that Islamic scholars had successfully initiated a structured framework for studying foreign elements -as well as inherited and borrowed-within its systematic function as its best.⁴² Lazarus-Yafeh (1996), on the other hand, emphasized that the heterogeneous aspect of medieval Muslim culture fostered a degree of openness among Muslims and offered a comfortable context for personal interactions and theological exchanges between adherents of many

³⁸ Abu 'Uthman 'Amru Ibn Bahr al-Jahiz, *al-Mukhtār fi al-Radd 'alā al-Naṣārā*, ed. Muhammad 'Abd Allah al-Sharqawi (Beirut: Daral Jil, 1991), <http://archive.org/details/mkrndns>.

³⁹ Abu 'Abdillah Muhammad ibn 'Umar ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Husayn ibn 'Ali al-Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *Al-Munāzarah Fī Radd 'alā al-Naṣārā* (Beirut: Dar al-Gharab al-Islamiy, 1986).

⁴⁰ Ahmad ibn Idrīs ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Qarāfī, *Al-Ajwibah al-Fākhirah 'an al-As`ilah al-Fājirah*, ed. Bakr Zakī 'Iwaḍ (Shirkah Sa'id Ra'fat li al-Tibā'ah, 1987); Diego R. Sarrió Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics across the Mediterranean: The Splendid Replies of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī* (d. 684/1285) (Leiden: BRILL, 2015), accessed September 11, 2022, <https://brill.com/view/title/26989>.

⁴¹ Waardenburg, "Observations on the Scholarly Study of Religions as Pursued in Some Muslim Countries."

⁴² Gustave E. von Grunebaum, *Medieval Islam A Study In Cultural Orientation*, Second (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1946), 336–37, <http://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.151252>.

faiths and sects.⁴³ This view suggested that Islam was one step ahead of other groups in the study of theology and religion and that the Islamic study of theology and religion was used for legal and political ends.⁴⁴

Al-Shahrastānī's Background and Reasons Behind the Writing of *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*

Al-Shahrastānī (b. 479/1086)⁴⁵⁴⁶ was born in Shahrastan, located in northern Khurasan.⁴⁷ Affiliated with Sunni-Ash'arīte Theology,⁴⁸ His intellectual career embarked firmly, and it was assumed that His Ash'arīte background played an essential role in constructing his scientific thought, particularly in writing *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*. Al-Shahrastānī, as history recorded, learned the Qur'an and exegesis (*Tafsīr*) from a very young. Before turning 10, his father arranged for him to receive an education from esteemed scholars in Khurasan, renowned for their extensive collection of religious texts for studying the Qur'an.⁴⁹ Some years later, he traveled to Naisapur to *Hadīth* and *'Ulūm al-Hadīth* with 'Ali ibn Ahmad al-Madani (d. 494/1100); continued then with *Fiqh* with Ahmad al-Khuwāfī (d. 500/1106); Theology or *'Ilm al-Kalām* with Abū al-Qāsim Salmān ibn Nāṣir al-Anṣārī (d. 412/1118). and *Uṣūl al-Fiqh* with Imam Abū Naṣr al-Qushayrī (d. 514/1120).⁵⁰ Al-

⁴³ Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, "Some Neglected Aspects of Medieval Muslim Polemics against Christianity," *Harvard Theological Review* 89, no. 1 (January 1996): 62, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816000031813>.

⁴⁴ Wasserstrom, "Islamate History of Religions?," 410.

⁴⁵ Bruce B. Lawrence, "Shahrastani on Indian Idol Worship," *Studia Islamica*, no. 38 (1973): 64, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1595309>.

⁴⁶ Muhammad Azizan Sabjan and Noor Shakirah Mat Akhir, "The Concept of the People of the Book (Ahl Al-Kitab) in Islamic Religious Tradition," *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 6, no. 1 (December 1, 2005): 16.

⁴⁷ Henrik Lagerlund, ed., *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2011), 1188, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-9729-4>.

⁴⁸ Toby Mayer, "Keys to the Arcana: Shahrastānī's Esoteric Commentary on the Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 14, no. 2 (2012): 129.

⁴⁹ Hilman Latief, "Comparative Religion in Medieval Muslim Literature," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 4, no. 23 (n.d.): 36.

⁵⁰ A. R. Gaiser, "Satan's Seven Specious Arguments: Al-Shahrastani's *Kitab al-Milal Wa-l-Nihal* in an Ismaili Context," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 19, no. 2 (March 18, 2008): 180, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etn001>.

Shahrastānī continued his intellectual wandering, moving from Naisapur to Khawarizm, where he studied with As'ad ibn Abī Naṣr al-Mayhānī (d. 527/1129) and Muhammad ibn Mahmūd al-Khawārizm (d. 568/1172).⁵¹ He performed *Hajj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca in 510/1116,⁵² before then went to Baghdad to learn at *Nizāmiyya* University, founded by Niẓām al-Mulk, an outstanding Shāfi'i and Ash'arī scholar, aimed to serve as the basis of the Abbasid dynasty's theology for power against the political theology of Buwayhi and Fatimid for three years.⁵³ Here, while studying in *Nizāmiyya*, al-Shahrastānī had a rigorous education in Ash'arite theology, which greatly influenced his writings on *Kitāb Nihāyat al-Iqdām fi 'Ilm al-Kalām*,⁵⁴ and *al-Milal wa Nihāl*.⁵⁵ According to this historical elaboration, al-Shahrastānī was raised in a particular setting and received education from teachers who followed the Ash'arite and Shāfi'iite schools.

Apart from his intellectual excellence, several considerations required detailed apprehension concerning al-Shahrastānī's main reason for writing *al-Milal wa al-Nihāl*. As noted by Gilliot et al (2003), al-Shahrastānī's composition of *al-Milal wa Nihāl* can be attributed to internal elements arising from the internal strife among Muslims spanning 500 years, from the 7th to the 12th century. Furthermore, the crusade was motivated by the objective of capturing Palestine *Eretz Yisra'el* (ארץ ישראַל) from the Muslims, leading to several external circumstances. Amidst the prevailing

⁵¹ Muhammad Azizan Sabjan, University of Science Malaysia (USM), Malaysia et al., "Early Christian Sects and Schisms in Al-Milal Wa Al-Nihāl: A Study on Muḥammad 'abd Al-Karīm Al-Shahrastānī," *TAFHIM: IKIM Journal of Islam and the Contemporary World* 8, no. 1 (October 17, 2015): 20–21.

⁵² Latief, "Comparative Religion in Medieval Muslim Literature," 36.

⁵³ Hodari Mahdan Abdallah, *Pasal Yahudi Dalam Kitab Kuning: Catatan Kritis Atas al-Milal Wa Nihāl Karya Syahrastani* (Jakarta dan Yogyakarta: JID: Jewish and Islamic Discourse, 2023), 21.

⁵⁴ Claude Gilliot et al., "Struggling with the Philosopher. A Refutation of Avicenna's Metaphysics. A New Arabic Edition and English Translation of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karim b. Ahmad al-Shahrastānī's *Kitab al-Musara'a*," *Studia Islamica*, no. 96 (2003): 2, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1596257>.

⁵⁵ Jeffry R. Halverson, "The Doctrines of Sunni Theology," in *Theology and Creed in Sunni Islam*, by Jeffry R. Halverson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2010), 16, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230106581_2.

societal conditions of the era, Theology emerged as the fundamental cause of conflict. Consequently, it commenced as a prominent topic of debate within the political sphere throughout that era.⁵⁶ Al-Shahrastānī endeavored to offer education on several theological concepts by consulting reliable sources to address issues and enhance public comprehension of theology during that period. In addition, he provided explanations without repudiation and refrained from utilizing words that contained offensive elements.⁵⁷

Al-Shahrastāni's *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* and the Enquiry of Other Religions

The emergence of *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* further indicates Islamic Civilization's enormous interest in studying theology and religion. Published in 521 H/ 1127 CE, it should be emphasized that *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* has dealt extensively with many sects and doctrinal groupings within Islam and other faiths and denominations such as pagan, Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, and others. As confirmed by Lazarus-Yafeh, *al Milal wa al-Nihal* was near to providing impartial, academic portrayals of other faiths; he wrote that *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* "... close to being objective, scholarly descriptions of other religions."⁵⁸ Faizal et. al. (2018) analysis was interesting to describe this issue, as he found that *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* has employed several scientific methods in studying religions, including inductive, deductive, descriptive comparative, and normative comparative methods. As commented, al-Shahrastānī has shown his capacity to verify the material's accuracy, demonstrating his critical position in considering the source of knowledge about the investigated religion. He has also effectively used sources to guarantee the data's legitimacy. al-Shahrastānī's emphasis on belief is only natural to be refined by subsequent reviewers by engaging in studies of other areas of religion, such as worship, tradition, and other aspects of

⁵⁶ Abdallah, *Pasal Yahudi Dalam Kitab Kuning: Catatan Kritis Atas al-Milal Wa Nihal Karya Syahrastani*, 24.

⁵⁷ Abdallah, 26.

⁵⁸ Lazarus-Yafeh, "Some Neglected Aspects of Medieval Muslim Polemics against Christianity," 61.

humankind. These features create a complete picture of the religion and its members.⁵⁹

As magnificent literature expositing multiple religious affiliations, the religious groups were divided into several major classifications. The first group is Islam, with several *Kalām* associations. *Second*, is Judaism and Christianity classified as *Ahl al-Kitab* or People of the Book'. The *third* group fell on adherents of religions with books similar to those such as Zoroastrianism and Manichean, defined as *Shibh Ahl al-Kitāb*. Last, *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* also discusses religious groups who do not occupy specific scriptures, such as ancient philosophers, Atheism, devotees of the moon and stars, idolaters, and Brahmanism. In the early parts of *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, Shahrastani wrote that:

"Our treatment shall cover Islamic sects and others who have a truly revealed book, as the Jews and Christians; Those with a book of a somewhat similar kind, as the Magians and the Manicheans; Those who have penal laws and statutes but no Book, as the first Sabaeans; and, finally, those who have neither Book nor penal laws nor religious laws, as the early philosophers, atheists, star-worshippers, idol-worshippers, and Brahmins. We shall mention the founders and followers of each."⁶⁰

Each of the religious belief groups was further divided into several groups. Islam, for instance, was put in the first chapter and then split into mainly 6 *Kalām* or *Uṣūl* groups: *al-Mu'tazilah*, *al-Jabariyah*, *al-Sifātiyyah*, *al-Khawārij*, *al-Murji'ah*, and *al-Shī'ah*. Each classification is then described further into sub-groups with a more detailed description and illustration, making it a seventy-three group of Muslim sects. The second chapter is about the People of the Book or *Ahl al-Kitāb* group, including Judaism and Christianity. Judaism is divided into three sects, while there are 3 groups of Christianity. The third chapter, as the last part of the *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* concerns those *Shibh Ahl al-Kitāb*, including the

⁵⁹ Faizal, Khir, and Mohd Fahmi, "Metodologi Al-Shahrastani Dalam Al-Milal Wa Al-Nihal," 8.

⁶⁰ Abu al-Fath Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Karim ibn Ahmad al-Shahrastani, *Muslim Sects and Divisions: The Section on Muslim Sects in Kitab al-Milal Wa al-Nihal*, trans. A. K. Kazi and J. G. Flynn (London: Kegan Paul International, 1984), 13; Abū al-Fath Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Ahmad al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal Wa al-Nihal*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar El Marefah, 1975), 37.

Magians and the Dualism group, respectively classified into four and five sub-sects.⁶¹

It is attractive to grasp the tiny number of sects in Judaism and Christianity listed in *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*. Accordingly, al-Shahrastānī did not avoid the fact that there are 71 sects of Judaism and 72 denominations of Christianity.⁶² It is due to his belief that there will only be *one* group that will be deliverance from sin and its consequences. In this case, al-Shahrastānī, besides his objective position regarding other religions, still conforms to his belief while arguing the ambiguity of plural truths within religious domination.⁶³

This part suits Sabjan, as he commented that *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* delivered a further position of Islam among religious pluralism. It is although Islam does not recognize other faiths, this does not imply that it does not appreciate them. Indeed, Islam rejects other faiths as the 'true' religion; However, Muslims worldwide are exhorted to respect other beliefs. Similarly, all faiths must respect Islam even if they do not acknowledge it as an authentic religion. This is when the religious typology offered by al-Shahrastānī's *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* might be helpful. This typology also educates and explains how to comprehend different religious traditions better.⁶⁴

Similarly, Zawawi et al., also described that Shahrestani's tactics in *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* finally demonstrate tolerance concerning the people of faith. In this sense, al-Shahrastānī's approach toward such mixing is objective. Still, he managed to keep his identity without undue intimidation and provocations in discussing the belief systems of other faiths and intellectual ideas.⁶⁵

⁶¹ al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal Wa al-Nihal*, 1:257–60.

⁶² al-Shahrastānī, 1:13.

⁶³ al-Shahrastani, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 10; al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal Wa al-Nihal*, 1:13.

⁶⁴ Sabjan, "Cendekiawan Heresiografi Awal dalam Perbandingan Agama," 89.

⁶⁵ Tuan Syarifah Nursyaza Aina Tuan Mohd Zawawi et al., "National Identity Construction in Malaysia Based on Al-Shahrastani's Proposition of Tolerance in Al-Milal Wa Al-Nihal," *Jurnal Islam Dan Masyarakat Kontemporeri* 23, no. 1 (April 30, 2022): 193–204, <https://doi.org/10.37231/jimk.2022.23.1.661>.

The objectivity of his work, al-Shahrastānī himself claimed at the very beginning of *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*:

و ننقل مأخذها ومصادرها عن كتب طائفه طائفه؛ على موجب اصطلاحاتها بعد الوقوف على مناهجها، و الفصح الشديد عن مبادئها وعواقبها⁶⁶

"We shall quote the sources, refer to each group's writings, follow their terminology after we have become acquainted with their methods, and investigate their basic principles and conclusions."⁶⁷

In general, it is apparent that al-Shahrastānī, through his *al-Milal- wa al-Nihal*, objectively observes other religions without losing his identity as a Muslim. On one side, al-Shahrastānī was still firmly committed to his Islamic theological belief. At the same time, he also observed and described those other religions based on their systematic theology and devotion. The proper conversation between Commitment and Openness in *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* will play an essential role in reconstructing the idea of *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* in the light of Comparative Theology.

al-Milal wa al-Nihal and its Relevance to Comparative Theology: Commitment to Islam as Basis

As previously said, Comparative Theology focuses on theological praxis directed to in-depth interreligious research yet anchored in a specific religious tradition.⁶⁸ It entails theological aspects of other faiths meeting another faith and pursuing the more progressive elements of each.⁶⁹ In Comparative Theology, researching different religions through the lens of comparison, discussion, appreciation, and assessment is required to inquire into a process of historical recapitulation to be capable of "going over" and "coming back" encounter processes.⁷⁰ The implementation of Comparative Theology in Al-Shahrastānī's *al-*

⁶⁶ al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal Wa al-Nihal*, 1:37.

⁶⁷ al-Shahrastani, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 13.

⁶⁸ Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 11.

⁶⁹ Winkler, "Reasons for and Contexts of Deep Theological Engagement with Other Religious Traditions in Europe: Toward a Comparative Theology," 9.

⁷⁰ Dehn, "A European (German) View on Comparative Theology: Dialogue with My Own Past," 42; Moyaert, "On Vulnerability: Probing the Ethical Dimensions of Comparative Theology."

Milal wa al-Nihal is apparent as he committed to Islam as his faith and affiliation while also studying and deepening the borders of religions, sects, and beliefs from their respective sources in an objective way. According to al-Shahrastānī, the student of theology and religion should carry out their task without bias or preconception.⁷¹

A further investigation regarding al-Shahrastānī's objectivity in exploring other religions concerning his commitment as a Muslim scholar is also observable in his other preliminaries discussing the differences between *al-Dīn*, *millah*, *shir'ah*, and some different terminologies related to the scope. *Dīn*, as al-Shahrastānī defined it, is not merely 'religion' in a superficial sense but obedience and submission (*al-Inqiyād wa al-Tā'ah*); recompense (*al-Jazā'*) and reckoning (*al-Hisāb*). Those diverse understandings of *al-Dīn* implied interrelated conceptions within its united semantic field, encompassing several word meanings with each conceptual framework. *al-Mutadayyin*, as such, submits, obeys, and believes in compensation and reckoning on the day of judgment.⁷²

His argument related to the conception of *Dīn* is then arranged further with the realization of a plural society. He continued his view, considering that since man must live with other members of his species to provide for his subsistence and prepare himself for his eternal destiny, this communal living must ensure mutual defense and cooperation. By mutual defense, he will be able to retain what is his, and by the partnership, he will be able to acquire what he lacks. This corporate lifestyle is the *Millah*. The route leading to it is the *Minhāj*, *Shir'ah*, or *Sunnah*. The agreement about this *Sunnah* is known as *Jamā'ah*.⁷³ On the other hand, the creation of *Millah* is only possible via a God-selected individual whose authenticity is shown by various indicators. Sometimes, the sign is embedded inside, before, or follows the message.⁷⁴

⁷¹ al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 12; al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal Wa al-Nihal*, 1:16.

⁷² al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal Wa al-Nihal*, 1:38.

⁷³ al-Shahrastānī, 1:38; al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 33.

⁷⁴ al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal Wa al-Nihal*, 1:38–39; al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 33–34.

Those classifications may demonstrate the differentiation between Islam and other religious affiliations, eventually explaining the departure between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in *Millah*. Al-Shahrastānī, in this case, emphasized here that the nature of *Millah* was traced back to prophet Ibrāhīm 'alayhi al-salām, while *Shari'ah* was rooted in the revelation of prophet Nūh *alayhi al-salām*. Laws and commandments (*al-Hudūd wa al-Ahkām*), in addition, were commenced on the hand of Adam, Shīt, and Idrīs 'alayhim al-salām.⁷⁵ As 'sharing figures' among three divine religions, al-Shahrastānī ensured in his exposition that religious rules and norms were initially founded within the same source in the way of prophets before finally completed on the hand of the Prophet Muhammad *shallallāhu 'alayhi wa sallam*:

"All religious ways and paths leached their culmination through Muhammad, in that shari'a which is the most perfect, most beautiful and most excellent... It is said that to Adam was given names and to Noah the meaning of these names, but to Abraham was given both names and their meanings; to Moses was given revelation and to Jesus the deeper understanding of revelation; but to Muhammad was given both revelation and its deeper understanding, according to 'the creed of your father, Abraham.'⁷⁶

***al-Milal wa al-Nihāl* and The Value of Openness: Towards a Further Engagement of Judaism in Comparative Theology**

Comparative Theology is a methodology that seeks to find an understanding of other religions so that a person who *passes over* can return with the same faith and increasing knowledge and level of faith. Openness in Comparative Theology is vital for those who study another religion to accept all differences and commitment of the believer through the practice of faith to other religions, then be able to explain their own beliefs and hope to accept each other in differences.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal Wa al-Nihāl*, 1:39.

⁷⁶ al-Shahrastānī, *Muslim Sects and Divisions*, 34; al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal Wa al-Nihāl*, 1:39.

⁷⁷ Marianne Moyaert, "Oneself as Another: The Frailty of Religious Commitments and Its Impact on Interreligious Dialogue," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 86, no. 4 (2010): 365, <https://doi.org/10.2143/ETL.86.4.2062420>.

The value of Openness in *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* is apparent through his objectivity in scrutinizing other religions through their sources. Indeed, there are some occasions where he initiated a humble critique and corrections regarding other religions in the view of Islam; however, those repudiations did not contrast with the factual observations. At the beginning of the chapter of People of the Books (*Ahl al-Kitab*), al-Shahrastānī wrote:

“Those who depart from the true way and Islamic law are those who say Sharia and provisions, limits and flags. They were divided into those with a verified book, such as the Torah and the Gospel, and the revelation addresses them as the People of the Book. And to those with a doubtful book, such as For the Magi and Manes. The scrolls revealed to Abraham, peace be upon him, were raised to heaven due to events brought about by the Magi.”⁷⁸

The deviation done by *ahl al-Kitāb* was also emphasised in the next part of the Book:

“For Jews and Christians. These two nations are among the major nations of the People of the Book. And the Jewish nation is greater because the law was for Moses, peace be upon him, and all the children of Israel were worshipers of that. They are obligated to abide by the Torah's provisions and the Gospel revealed to Christ; peace be upon him. So the Jews did not submit to this issue Jesus son of Maryam, peace be upon him, and claimed that he was commanded to follow Moses, peace be upon him, and to agree with the Torah, so he crossed and changed, and promised him those changes, including changing Saturday to Sunday. Including changing eating pork, which was forbidden in the Torah. Including circumcision, washing, and so on. The Muslims have clarified that the two security forces have been altered and distorted; otherwise, Jesus, peace be upon him, was the prescriber of what Moses, peace be upon him, brought, and Muhammad, the prophet of mercy, heralds both of them, may God's prayers be upon them all. Their imams, prophets, and writers commanded them to do so.”⁷⁹

To limit our discussion in this paper, an analysis concerning Comparative Theology in its relevance to al-Shahrastānī's *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* will be restricted to some earlier expositions concerning Judaism in the chapter of *Ahl al-Kitab*; Al-Shahrastānī commenced his elucidation of *Ahl al-Kitāb* through a critique regarding theological errors of Judaism and Christianity. On the other hand,

⁷⁸ al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal Wa al-Nihal*, 1:208.

⁷⁹ al-Shahrastānī, 1:209.

this review was also accompanied by an appraisal of the genealogical nature of both religions under their current theological understanding. In Judaism, for example, al-Shahrastānī explained that:

"They are the nation of Moses, peace be upon him, and their Book is the Torah: the first Book that came down from heaven. I mean that what was sent down to Abraham and other prophets, peace be upon them, were not called a book; rather, they were scrolls (*suhufan*), and the news was reported from the Prophet (Muhammad), peace and blessings be upon him, that he said: God Almighty created Adam with his hand, and He created the unity of Eden with his hand and wrote the Torah with his hand, so I prioritize it other than the rest of the books (*Kutub*), and that included other books (*asfār*). He mentions the beginning of creation in the first Book, then mentions the rulings and limits, conditions and stories, exhortations and remembrances of God in the other books."⁸⁰

Al-Shahrastānī's description of the origin of Judaism was officially traced to the Qur'an, as he labeled them as the people of Moses, *Mūsā' alayhi al-salām*. However, his additional inspection was closely inspired or maybe taken from the Jewish tradition. First, the notion of Abraham Scroll or *Suhuf Ibrāhīm* in Judaism was sometimes debated to be defined as *Sefer Yezitrah* or *סֵפֶר יְצִירָה* (*Sefer Yetzirah*) that according to the earliest source, was attributed to the patriarch Abraham. *אַבְרָהָם*⁸¹ Apart from the *Tanakh* (תְּנַךְ) and the *Talmūd* (תַּלְמִידָּח), *Sefer Yezitrah* is perhaps the most remarked upon work of Jewish national literature due to its status as the purportedly oldest and most revered Book of Jewish Mysticism.⁸² In this case, at the beginning of his appraisal of Judaism, al-Shahrastānī has developed a specific intellectual basis and Openness regarding Judaism in its association with their systematic belief. If al-Shahrastānī had been extremely exclusive,

⁸⁰ al-Shahrastānī, 1:210–11.

⁸¹ Kaplan Aryeh, *Sefer Yetzirah; The Book of Creation In Theory and Practice* (Boston: Weiser Books, 1997).

⁸² Eliyahu Rosh-Pinnah, "The Sefer Yetzirah and the Original Tetragrammaton (Ernst E. Ettish)," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 57, no. 3 (1967): 212–26, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1453774>; Tzahi Weiss, "'The Book of Formation of the World': Sefer Yetzirah and *Hilkhot Yetzirah*," *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 27, no. 2 (September 20, 2019): 168–79, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1477285X-12341301>.

he would not have deeply apprehended *Yezitrah*, which was apparent in the earlier part of the Judaism discussion.

Second, it is also observable that al-Shahrastānī constructs a fair illustration regarding Judaism in how *God wrote the Book by His hand*, as the narrative is explicitly related to the history of Torah revelation to Moses in Mount Sinai. *Asfār* (أَسْفَار) in the text was a direct translation of 'Books' in the Hebrew Bible unavoidably concerning five books of Torah Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. An impartial comprehension done by al-Shahrastānī will be more transparent if we look at the authentic Hebrew terms of those five books; *Bərē'šít* (בראשית), *Šəmōt* (שְׁמוֹת), *Vayyīqrā'* (וַיַּקְרָא), *Bəmīdbar* (בְּמִדְבָּר), and *Dəbārīm* (דְּבָרִים). The word Arabic *asfār*, which is a plural form of *sifr* (سفر) used by al-Shahrastānī, shares a comparable Semitic root with *Sēpēr* (סֵפֶר) or as a common additional term before the book names; Book of Genesis, for example, is called *Sēpēr Bərē'šít* (ספר בראשית), while Book of Deuteronomy is called *Sēpēr Dəbārīm* (ספר דברים), and so on.⁸³ In Arabic, the five books of Moses were known respectively as *al-Takwīn* or *al-Khalq* (التكوين\الخلق), *al-Khurūj* (الخروج), *al-Lāwīn* (اللاؤين), *Ihsā* (إحسان), and *al-Istīthnā* (استثناء); so the 'Book of Genesis' in Arabic may be known as *Sifr al-Takwīn* or *Sifr al-Khalq* (سفر التكوين أو سفر الخلق), While the Book of Exodus is called *Sifr al-Khurūj* (سفر الخروج).⁸⁴ A reciprocal dialogue between *Sifr* and *Sēpēr* also shows an Openness regarding Jewish scripture, as the whole revelation before prophet Muhammad was justified to be altered (*tahrīf*), confirming its inauthenticity; however, al-Shahrastānī yet described the *Torah* as Jews see it.

Third, in addition to the preceding arguments, al-Shahrastānī's exposition regarding the origin of the *Ten Commandments* or *asérét ha-dvarím* (עשרה הדברות) as the summary of *Tanakh* and the

⁸³ Adele Berlin, Marc Zvi Brettler, and Michael A. Fishbane, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible: Jewish Publication Society Tanakh Translation* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁸⁴ Suhayl Zakkār, ed., *Al-Tawrah Tarjamah 'Arabiyyah 'Umruha Akthar min 'Alf 'Am* (Beirut; Damascus: Dar Kotaiba, 2007), <http://archive.org/details/TheTorah>.

compilation of the later part of *Tanakh* -*Nəbī'īm* and *Kətūvīm* (נְבִיאִים) and *Kətūvīm* (קְטוּבִים) also approved the Jewish theological understanding in the view of Islam. In the case of the Decalogue,⁸⁵ al-Shahrastānī defined as *al-Lawh* or *al-Alwāh* (p) or tablet as below:

وأنزل عليه أيضاً الألواح على شبه مختصر ما في التوراة؛ تشمل على الأقسام العلمية والعملية. قال الله تعالى: (وكتبنا له في الألواح من كل شيء موعظة) إشارة إلى تمام

القسم العلمي (وتفصيلاً لكل شيء) إشارة إلى تمام القسم العملي.⁸⁶

"He also sent down the tablets (*al-Alwāh*) on the quasi-abbreviation of what is in the Torah. It includes scientific and practical sections. God Almighty said: (And we wrote for him in the Tablets an exhortation of everything) about the completeness of the scientific part (and in detail to everything) about the completeness of the practical part."

The *fourth* argument concerning al-Shahrastānī's Openness to the Jewish tradition is when he affirmed the existence of Yūsha' ibn Nun, written as يوشع بن نون as Moses's predecessor of Judaism authority following his death. In the Western tradition, the figure was commonly introduced as Hoshea or Joshua, the son of Nun:⁸⁷

"They said: And Moses, peace be upon him, had passed on the secrets of the Torah and the Tablets to Joshua bin Nun, his guardian and his heir, and the one in charge after him, to pass them on to the children of Aaron, because the matter was shared between him and his brother Aaron, peace be upon them, as the Almighty said a story about Moses, peace be upon him, in his supplication when he revealed To him first: (and make him share my affair) and he was the executor. When Aaron died while Moses was still alive, the bequest was transferred to Joshua bin Nun as a deposit to pass it on to Shabeer and Shibr, the sons of Aaron. This is because the will and the imamate are stable, and some are deposited."⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Jonathan Willis, *The Reformation of the Decalogue: Religious Identity and the Ten Commandments in England, c.1485–1625* (Cambridge University Press, 2017); Patrick D. Miller, "The Place of the Decalogue in the Old Testament and Its Law," *Interpretation* 43, no. 3 (July 1, 1989): 229–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002096438904300302>.

⁸⁶ al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal Wa al-Nihal*, 1:211.

⁸⁷ J. D. (James Dixon) Douglas et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England : Inter-Varsity Press ; Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House, 1982), 621, <http://archive.org/details/newbibledictio00jddo>.

⁸⁸ al-Shahrastānī, *Al-Milal Wa al-Nihal*, 1:211.

The importance of Joshua's figure was his present was Moses' successor in guiding the Children of Israel was obliged to complete the writing of the Torah, besides, of course, writing his Book of Joshua (ספר יהושע), which was sequenced into the sixth Book in the Tanakh, the Book of Joshua.⁸⁹ In Exodus 24: 12-14, Joshua's respected position was described explicitly:

12) "The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and wait there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the teachings and commandments I have inscribed to instruct them." 13) So Moses and his attendant Joshua arose, and Moses ascended the mountain of God. 14) To the elders, he said, "Wait here for us until we return to you. You have Aaron and Hur with you; let anyone with a legal matter approach them."⁹⁰

Al-Shahrastānī's explanation about Joshua also exposed another perspective in its relation to the Openness value in encountering other religions as he followed the chronological order of the *Tanakh* compilation. Following the framework of Comparative Theology, al-Shahrastānī has carried out proper dialogical relationships between Commitment and Openness in describing religious plurality in *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*. In this sense, al-Shahrastānī seemed to employ an equivalent step in describing *asfār al-Tawrah*, going around the factual condition of Judaism to describe it in his *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* regardless of *tahrif*.

Conclusion

Regarding the offered research question, there is no doubt that al-Shahrastānī's description of Judaism in his *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* discharged several interchangeable approaches in the framework of Comparative Theology. First and foremost is his way of solidifying his commitment to the religion of Islam while exploring other religions with a sense of openness. This way of employment has been apparent since the beginning of the work, as he emphasized errors committed by those religions in the view of Islam, then continued with an objective, circumstantial account of those religious affiliations. The discussion concerning *Sēpēr Yəśīrā*, compilation altogether with *Tanakhaséret ha-dvarim*, to the continued

⁸⁹ George Robinson, *Essential Torah: A Complete Guide to the Five Books of Moses* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2008), 98.

⁹⁰ Berlin, Brettler, and Fishbane, *The Jewish Study Bible*, bk. Exodus 24: 12-14.

leadership of Joshua supports the advancement of Islamic-Jewish relations in the cutting-edge approach of Comparative Theology.

It observed that reflections on the study of religions presented by al-Shahrastānī in *al-Milal wa Nihal* remarkably provided convenience in studying other religions. However, severe studies related to that are still scarce. Some questions, however, remained: To what extent al-Shahrastānī's way of describing religions may be inspirational to the development of the future study of religions? Is there any chance for *al-Milal wa al-Nihal* to contribute to the discourse of interfaith/ interreligious dialogue? Is Comparative Theology an approach that can accurately contextualize *al-Milal wa al-Nihal*? Bringing up a millennium age of literature is uneasy work, as it may deal with countless changes, challenges, and obstructions all along the way. However, it appears to me that is precisely what religious scholars do: bridging tradition to modernity to ensure its divinity.

References

Aafreedi, Navras J. "Antisemitism in the Muslim Intellectual Discourse in South Asia." *Religions* 10, no. 7 (July 2019): 442. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10070442>.

'Abd al-Bāqī, Muhammad Fuād. *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras Li Alfāz al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Misriyya, 1944.

Abdallah, Hodari Mahdan. *Pasal Yahudi Dalam Kitab Kuning: Catatan Kritis Atas al-Milal Wa Nihal Karya Syahrastani*. Jakarta dan Yogyakarta: JID: Jewish and Islamic Discourse, 2023.

Ahmed, Shahab, and Yossef Rapoport. *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*. Karachi: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010.

Ananikian, M. H. "Tahrif or the Alteration of the Bible According to the Moslems. Abbreviated and Translated from the Bessarione, Xxvi, 1922." *The Muslim World* 14, no. 1 (1924): 61–84. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.1924.tb00497.x>.

Archer, George. "John, Jesus, and Mary in the Qur'an." In *The Routledge Companion to the Qur'an*, edited by George Archer, Maria M. Dakake, and Daniel A. Madigan. Routledge, 2021.

Aryeh, Kaplan. *Sefer Yetzirah; The Book of Creation In Theory and Practice*. Boston: Weiser Books, 1997.

Baeq, Daniel S., and Sam Kim, eds. *Prophets in the Qur'an and the Bible*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2022.

Bakker, Freek L. "Comparative Theology: Deep Learning across Religious Borders The New Comparative Theology: Interreligious Insights from the Next Generation." *Exchange* 40, no. 3 (2011): 289–92. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157254311X579659>.

Bechmann, Ulrike. "Biblical Figures of Women in the Qur'an." In *The Early Middle Ages*, edited by Franca Ela Consolino and Judith Herrin, 345–76. The Society of Biblical Literature, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv13xpqnt.18>.

Berlin, Adele, Marc Zvi Brettler, and Michael A. Fishbane, eds. *The Jewish Study Bible: Jewish Publication Society Tanakh Translation*. Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press, 2004.

Bīrūnī, Abu al-Rayhān Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-. *Al-Athār al-Bāqiyah 'an al-Qurūn al-Khāliyah*. Teheran: Miras Maktoob, 2001.

—. *Alberuni's India. An Account of the Religion, Philosophy, Literature, Geography, Chronology, Astronomy, Customs, Laws and Astrology of India about A.D. 1030*. Edited by Eduard Sachau. Vol. 1. 2 vols. London : K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., Ltd., 1910. <http://archive.org/details/alberunisindiaac01biru>.

—. *Tahqiq Ma Li Al-Hind Min Maqūlah Maqbūlah Fi al-'Aql Aw Mardhūlah*. Beirut: Alam Al Kotob, 1983.

—. *The Chronology Of Ancient Nations*. Edited by C Edward Sachau. London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1879. <http://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.282084>.

Clooney, Francis X. *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders*. Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Clooney, SJ, Francis X. *Comparative Theology*. Vol. 1. Oxford University Press, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198797852.003.0017>.

Cucarella, Diego R. Sarrió. *Muslim-Christian Polemics across the Mediterranean: The Splendid Replies of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfi (d. 684/1285)*. Leiden: BRILL, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004285606>.

Davie, Grace, and David Wyatt. "Document Analysis." In *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in The Study of Religion*,

edited by Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler, 151–61. London ; New York: Routledge, 2011.

Dehn, Ulrich. "A European (German) View on Comparative Theology: Dialogue with My Own Past." *Religions*, no. 3 (2012): 1085–93.

Douglas, J. D. (James Dixon), N. Hillyer, F. F. (Frederick Fyvie) Bruce, and J. D. (James Dixon) New Bible dictionary Douglas. *New Bible Dictionary*. Leicester, England : Inter-Varsity Press ; Wheaton, Ill. : Tyndale House, 1982. <http://archive.org/details/newbibledictioa00jddo>.

Faizal, A. K. Mohd, Mohamed Fairooz bin Abdul Khir, and A. K. Mohd Fahmi. "Metodologi Al-Shahrastani Dalam Al-Milal Wa Al-Nihal." *Journal of Asian Islamic Higher Institutions* 4, no. 1 (2018). <http://jurnal7.usas.edu.my/index.php/JAIHI/article/view/20>.

Gaiser, A. R. "Satan's Seven Specious Arguments: Al-Shahrastani's *Kitab al-Milal Wa-l-Nihal* in an Ismaili Context." *Journal of Islamic Studies* 19, no. 2 (March 18, 2008): 178–95. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/etn001>.

Gilliot, Claude, Wilferd Madelung, Toby Mayer, and I. B. Londres. "Struggling with the Philosopher. A Refutation of Avicenna's Metaphysics. A New Arabic Edition and English Translation of Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Karim b. Ahmad al-Shahrastani's *Kitab al-Musara'a*." *Studia Islamica*, no. 96 (2003): 139. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1596257>.

Grunbaum, Gustave E. von. *Medieval Islam A Study In Cultural Orientation*. Second. Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1946. <http://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.151252>.

Halverson, Jeffry R. "The Doctrines of Sunni Theology." In *Theology and Creed in Sunni Islam*, by Jeffry R. Halverson, 13–31. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2010. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230106581_2.

Ibn Taymiyah, Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Halim. *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity: Ibn Taymiyya's al-Jawab al-Sahih*. Translated by Thomas F. Michel. Studies in Islamic Philosophy and Science. Delmar, N.Y: Caravan Books, 1984.

Jahiz, Abu 'Uthman 'Amru Ibn Bahr al-. *al-Mukhtār fi al-Radd 'alā al-Naṣārā*. Edited by Muhammad 'Abd Allah al-Sharqawi. Beirut: Daral Jil, 1991. <http://archive.org/details/mkrdns>.

Kathir, Abū al-Fidā 'Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn. *Qaṣaṣ Al-Anbiyā'*. Makkah: Maktabah al-Thalib al-Jamī'i, 1988.

Katia Cytryn-Silverman. "The Dome and the Rock Where Adam, Moses, and Jesus Meet," 71–96. Leiden: Boston: Brill, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004437210_006.

Lagerlund, Henrik, ed. *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy*. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2011. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-9729-4>.

Langermann, Y. Tzvi. *Monotheism & Ethics: Historical and Contemporary Intersections Among Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. BRILL, 2011.

Latief, Hilman. "Comparative Religion in Medieval Muslim Literature." *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 4, no. 23 (n.d.).

Lawrence, Bruce B. "Shahrastani on Indian Idol Worship." *Studia Islamica*, no. 38 (1973): 61. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1595309>.

Lazarus-Yafeh, Hava. "Some Neglected Aspects of Medieval Muslim Polemics against Christianity." *Harvard Theological Review* 89, no. 1 (January 1996): 61–84. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017816000031813>.

Lubis, Dahlia, Nasaiy Aziz, Ali Imran Sinaga, Ahmad Tamrin Sikumbang, Ansari Yamamah, Muhammad Ridwan, Agung Suharyanto, Saiful Bahri, and M. Yoserizal Saragih. "An Eschatological Study of Jerusalem in Biblical and Quranic Literature." *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 29, no. 3 (September 1, 2020): 217–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10656219.2020.1801539>.

Miller, Patrick D. "The Place of the Decalogue in the Old Testament and Its Law." *Interpretation* 43, no. 3 (July 1, 1989): 229–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002096438904300302>.

Mooren, Thomas. "Monotheism Revisited: Islamic Monotheism in Dialogue with Moses Ben Maimon (Maimonides, 1135-1204)." *MST Review* 20, no. 1 (2018): 1–1.

Moyaert, Marianne. "On Vulnerability: Probing the Ethical Dimensions of Comparative Theology." *Religions* 3 (2012).

—. “Oneself as Another: The Frailty of Religious Commitments and Its Impact on Interreligious Dialogue.” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 86, no. 4 (2010): 355–77. <https://doi.org/10.2143/ETL.86.4.2062420>.

Nelson, Chad, and Jr Woods Robert H. “Content Analysis.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in The Study of Religion*, edited by Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler, 109–21. London ; New York: Routledge, 2011.

Netton, Ian Richard. *Encyclopedia of Islamic Civilization and Religion*. Routledge, 2013.

Noegel, Scott B. *The A to Z of Prophets in Islam and Judaism*. Lanham : Scarecrow Press, 2010. <http://archive.org/details/atozofprophetsin0000noeg>.

Penchansky, David. *Solomon and the Ant: The Qur'an in Conversation with the Bible*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2021.

Pregill, Michael E. “The Hebrew Bible and the Quran: The Problem of the Jewish ‘Influence’ on Islam.” *Religion Compass* 1, no. 6 (2007): 643–59. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8171.2007.00044.x>.

Qarāfi, Ahmad ibn Idrīs ibn ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-. *Al-Ajwibah al-Fākhirah ‘an al-As`ilah al-Fājirah*. Edited by Bakr Zakī ‘Iwād. Shirkah Sa’id Ra`fat li al-Ṭibā’ah, 1987.

Razi, Abu ’Abdillah Muhammad ibn ’Umar ibn al-Hasan ibn al-Husayn ibn ’Ali al-Fakhr al-Din al-. *Al-Munāzarah Fī Radd ‘alā al-Nasārā*. Beirut: Dar al-Gharab al-Islamiy, 1986.

Robinson, George. *Essential Torah: A Complete Guide to the Five Books of Moses*. New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2008.

Rosh-Pinnah, Eliyahu. “The Sefer Yetzirah and the Original Tetragrammaton (Ernst E. Ettish).” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 57, no. 3 (1967): 212–26. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1453774>.

Sabjan, Muhammad Azizan. “Cendekiawan Heresiografi Awal dalam Perbandingan Agama: Muhammad ‘Abd Al-Karim Al-Shahrastani dan Kitabnya, Al-Milal Wa Al-Nihal: Early Heresiographical Scholars in Comparative Religion: Muhammad ‘Abd Al-Karim Al-Shahrastani and His al-Milal wa al-Nihal.” *‘Abqari Journal* 26, no. 1 (April 28, 2022): 79–92. <https://doi.org/10.33102/abqari.vol26no1.403>.

Sabjan, Muhammad Azizan, and Noor Shakirah Mat Akhir. "The Concept of the People of the Book (Ahl Al-Kitab) in Islamic Religious Tradition." *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 6, no. 1 (December 1, 2005): 15–36.

Segovia, Carlos A. *The Quranic Noah and the Making of the Islamic Prophet: A Study of Intertextuality and Religious Identity Formation in Late Antiquity. The Quranic Noah and the Making of the Islamic Prophet.* De Gruyter, 2015. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110405897>.

Shahrastānī, Abū al-Fath Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Ahmad al-. *Al-Milal Wa al-Nihāl.* Vol. 1. 3 vols. Beirut: Dar El Marefah, 1975.

Shahrastānī, Abu al-Fath Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Ahmad al-. *Muslim Sects and Divisions: The Section on Muslim Sects in Kitab al-Milal Wa al-Nihāl.* Translated by A. K. Kazi and J. G. Flynn. London: Kegan Paul International, 1984.

Sondy, Amanullah De, Michelle A. Gonzalez, and William S. Green. *Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: An Introduction to Monotheism.* Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020.

Stroumsa, Sarah. "Jewish Polemics Against Islam and Christianity in the Light of Judaeo-Arabic Texts." In *Muslims and Others in Early Islamic Society.* Routledge, 2004.

Taymiyyah, Abu al-'Abbās Taqīyy al-Dīn Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Halīm ibn. *Al-Jawāb al-Ṣahīḥ Li Man Baddala Dīn al-Masīh.* Riyadh: Dār al-'Āsimah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī, 1999.

Thomas, David. "Apologetic and Polemic in the Letter from Cyprus and Ibn Taymiyya's Jawāb al-Ṣahīḥ Li-Man Baddala Dīn al-Masīh." In *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, by Shahab Ahmed and Yossef Rapoport. Karachi: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010.

Thomas, David, and Alexander Mallett. *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Volume 2 (900-1050).* BRILL, 2010.

Thomas, David, David Richard Thomas, and Barbara Roggema. *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History. Volume 3 (1050-1200).* BRILL, 2011.

Toby Mayer. "Keys to the Arcana: Shahrastānī's Esoteric Commentary on the Qur'an." *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 14, no. 2 (2012).

Tottoli, Roberto. *Biblical Prophets in the Qur'an and Muslim Literature*. London: Routledge, 2001. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203037256>.

Tottoli, Roberto, and Jason Welle. "Biblical Prophets: Moses, Joseph, Jonah, and Job." In *The Routledge Companion to the Qur'an*, edited by George Archer, Maria M. Dakake, and Daniel A. Madigan. Routledge, 2021.

Ṭūfi, Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd al-Qawī al-. *Muslim Exegesis of the Bible in Medieval Cairo: Najm al-Din al-Tūfi's (d. 716/1316) Commentary on the Christian Scriptures*. Edited by Lejla Demiri. History of Christian-Muslim Relations, v. 19. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2013.

—. *Ta'līq ‘Alā al-Anājil al-Arba'Ah Wa Kutub al-Anbiyā` al-Ithnā 'Asyara Min al-Tawrah*. Edited by Mūsā ibn Muhammad Ḥiṣād al-Zahrānī. Damascus: Akl Publishing, 2016.

University of Science Malaysia (USM), Malaysia, Muḥammad Azizan Sabjan, Noor Shakirah Mat Akhir, and University of Science Malaysia (USM), Malaysia. "Early Christian Sects and Schisms in al-Milal wa al-Nihāl: A Study on Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī." *TAFHIM : IKIM Journal of Islam and the Contemporary World* 8, no. 1 (October 17, 2015): 19–36. <https://doi.org/10.56389/tafhim.vol8no1.2>.

Valkenberg, Pim. *A Companion to Comparative Theology : Chapter 3 The Development of Comparative Theology in the Twentieth Century*. BRILL, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004388390>.

Waardenburg, Jacques. "Observations on the Scolarly Study of Religions as Pursued in Some Muslim Countries." *Numen* 45, no. 3 (January 1, 1998): 235–57. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1568527981562177>.

Wasserstrom, Steven M. "Islamicate History of Religions?" *History of Religions* 27, no. 4 (May 1988): 405–11. <https://doi.org/10.1086/463130>.

—. "Jewish Sectarianism in the Near East." In *Judaism in Practice*, edited by Lawrence Fine, 229–36. From the Middle Ages through the Early Modern Period. Princeton University Press, 2001. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1ddczxh.23>.

Watt, William Montgomery. *Muslim-Christian Encounters: Perceptions and Misperceptions*. London: Routledge, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315819624>.

Weiss, Tzahi. “‘The Book of Formation of the World’: Sefer Yetzirah and Hilkhot Yetzirah.” *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 27, no. 2 (September 20, 2019): 168–79. <https://doi.org/10.1163/1477285X-12341301>.

Willis, Jonathan. *The Reformation of the Decalogue: Religious Identity and the Ten Commandments in England, c.1485–1625*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.

Winkler, Ulrich. “Reasons for and Contexts of Deep Theological Engagement with Other Religious Traditions in Europe: Toward a Comparative Theology.” *Religions* 3 (2012).

Zakkar, Suhayl, ed. *Al-Tawrah Tarjamah 'Arabiyyah 'Umruha Akthar min 'Alf 'Am*. Beirut; Damascus: Dar Kotaiba, 2007. <http://archive.org/details/TheTorah>.

Zawawi, Tuan Syarifah Nursyaza Aina Tuan Mohd, Aman Daima Md Zain, Wan Mohd Khairul Firdaus Wan Khairuldin, Rahimah Embong, Mohd Safri Ali, Mohd Hasrul Shuhari, and Hanif Md Lateh Junid. “National Identity Construction in Malaysia Based on Al-Shahrastani’s Proposition of Tolerance in Al-Milal Wa Al-Nihal.” *Jurnal Islam Dan Masyarakat Kontemporari* 23, no. 1 (April 30, 2022): 193–204. <https://doi.org/10.37231/jimk.2022.23.1.661>.