

# Islam on Al-Attas and Wilfred C Smith Perspective (Analysis Study on The Meaning of Islamic Religion)

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## Abstract

*This article discusses to find out deeply Al-Attas and Smith perspective on understanding Islam, which are both of them have differences worldview on understanding a reality. Al-Attas as a muslim scholar who respearhead Worldview of Islam in this modern era has a differences perspective with Smith as a orientalist and a pioneer of world theology concept which is all of his thought based on Western worldview. The analysis focuses to theological aspect that is rooted of problem on Islamic concept according to them. Based on the analysis could be reached that Al-Attas said that Islam is a word that is directly chosen by Allah to describe the meaning of religion, and necessitates to all Muslims did all the sharī'ah created by Allah SWT both in the pillars of Islam and other teachings contained in the al-Qur'an and Hadith, and underlying it all with faith against God. While Smith refers to Islam only as a word that means submission and applied to all mankind where all can be referred to as Muslims if they commit surrender to their God without looking at their worship. It all resulted in the emergence of the understanding of religious pluralism in which all religions are the same to teach a goodness.*

**Keywords:** *The meaning of Islam, Submission, Al-Attas, W.C. Smith*

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### Abstrak

Fokus pembahasan pada artikel ini adalah untuk mengetahui lebih dalam perspektif Al-Attas dan Smith dalam memahami Islam, di mana keduanya memiliki perbedaan worldview dalam memandang suatu realitas. Al-Attas sebagai salah satu cendekiawan muslim yang mempelopori worldview Islam pada era modern ini memiliki perspektif yang berbeda dengan Smith sebagai seorang orientalis dan pencetus konsep world theology yang pemikirannya didasari dengan worldview Barat. Analisis difokuskan pada aspek teologi yang menjadi akar permasalahan dalam konsep Islam menurut keduanya. Berdasarkan analisis yang telah dilakukan dapat disimpulkan bahwa Al-Attas mengatakan Islam itu sebuah kata yang langsung dipilih oleh Allah untuk mempersentasikan makna agama, dan mengharuskan kepada seluruh umat Islam menjalankan semua syariat yang telah ditetapkan oleh Allah swt, baik dalam rukun Islam maupun ajaran-ajaran lainnya yang terdapat di dalam al-Qur'an dan Hadits, dan mendasari itu semua dengan keimanan terhadap Allah. Sedangkan Smith memaknai Islam hanya sebagai sebuah kata yang berarti penyerahan dan berlaku pada seluruh umat manusia, di mana semuanya dapat disebut sebagai orang Islam jika ia melakukan penyerahan diri kepada Tuhannya, tanpa melihat kepada ritual dan ibadah yang dilakukan. Hal ini mengakibatkan terhadap munculnya pemahaman pluralisme agama dimana semua agama itu sama saja mengajarkan kepada suatu kebaikan.

**Kata Kunci:** Makna Islam, Penyerahan Diri, Al-Attas, W.C. Smith

### Introduction

In recent years, there are many cases in Indonesia which are related to religion, especially to Islam. Some of those cases are the blasphemy of religion which befalls Basuki Tjahaja Purnama,<sup>1</sup> the case of burning Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) flag which there is a sentence of Tauhid on the flag, happened in Garut when the anniversary of the *santri* days.<sup>2</sup> The case of intolerance or the violation of religious freedom and belief ranging from the prohibition of the establishment of a place of worship, prohibition of celebration of ethnic culture, destruction of places of worship to the rejection of

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<sup>1</sup>Annisa Ulfa Damayanti, "Jalan Panjang Kasus Penistaan Agama Ahok, dari Al Maidah 51 hingga PK", *Okenews*, February 26, 2018, accessed via <https://nasional.okezone.com/read/2018/02/26/337/1864843/jalan-panjang-kasus-penistaan-agama-ahok-dari-al-maidah-51-hingga-pk>, on Sept 8, 2020, 5:35 WIB.

<sup>2</sup>"Bagaimana Pembakaran 'bendera HTI' itu jadi 'pembakaran bendera Tauhid?'" *BBC News Indonesia*, October 24, 2018, accessed via <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-45951832>, on Sept 8, 2020, 5:34 WIB.

neighbors against the unreligious.<sup>34</sup> Some issues of radicalism that are widespread until some colleges are accused of teaching radical to his students even the Da'i or religious leaders are many who accused to teach radicalism to district until the government made a list of radical and planned to plan the certification of scholars to avoid radical clerics, or the issue of terrorism that has always been attributed to Islam.<sup>5</sup>

From the various issues listed above, which are still a big scourge and concern for the government that can cause inconvenience or tumult in this nation is the issue of radicalism and terrorism. This is compounded by the religious attitudes and expressions of "some" Muslims who tend to be exclusive and often justifying their understanding is the right one. That things has been spreading, not only the fight between religious ideology but also the wide opening of terrorism discourse in the part of the world. Especially in the global context, its post-war world trade center (WTC) in the USA in 2001, terrorism which received support from the movement of radicalism and religious fundamentalism is often the object of the alleged bombing perpetrators. Of course, the phenomenon on the one hand strengthens western suspicion of the Islamic world, On the other hand can be denied many circles especially internal Islam itself which says that not all terrorist acts represent Muslims.

Seeing from a wide range of cases of terrorism we can not say that there are some cases that are indeed their motive is to jihad on the way of God with the foundation of verses of the Qur'an that they understand, as does the case of the Bali bombings made by Imam Samudra et al. As if Islam taught his faithful and fanatical followers to perform the acts of terror as a form of faith. His question is whether it is such Islamic teaching that must be through violence in banning an evil or otherwise they are wrong to understand the teachings of

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<sup>3</sup>Muhammad Ilman Nafi'an, "6 Kasus Pelanggaran Kebebasan Beragama di Awal 2017", *Dream.co.id*, April 25, 2017, accessed via <https://www.dream.co.id/news/6-kasus-pelanggaran-kebebasan-beragama-di-triwulan-i-2017-170425e.html>, on Sept 8, 2020, 5:37 WIB.

<sup>4</sup>Yuangga Kurnia Yahya, "Phenomenological approach in interfaith communication: a Solution to allegation of religious blasphemy in Indonesia", in *Al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Ponorogo: IAIN Ponorogo, 2018), 306.

<sup>5</sup>Muhammad Subarkah, "Sertifikat Penceramah: MUI Menjaga Umat dan Menjaga Bangsa", *Republika*, Sept 8, 2020, accessed via <https://republika.co.id/berita/qgaqhk385/sertifikat-penceramah-mui-menjaga-umat-dan-menjaga-bangsa> on Sept 8, 2020, 5:29 WIB.

Islam.<sup>6</sup> Because according to the Quraish Syihab Islam is a religion that crave peace in its personal and society, both physically and mentally.<sup>7</sup>

That is why the author wants to research Islam deeper in this study by reviewing the meaning of Islam itself through two points of view of two prominent figures both are Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas and Wilfred Cantwell Smith.

Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas is a Muslim scholar and an expert who master various sciences such as theology, philosophy and metaphysics, history, and literature. He is also a productive and authoritative writer, who has given some new contribution on Islamic disciplines and Malay civilization.<sup>8</sup> In Islamic contemporary world, he is the first person who defines, conceptualize and spell out the meaning of scope and the capacity if Islamic education, ideas and Islamic methods in contemporary knowledge, essence and university establishment, as well as formulation and systematic metaphysics of Islam and philosophy of science in a very systematic and philosophical form.<sup>9</sup> According to him Islam implies trust and belief also as well as surrender in devotion (*Islam*). Islam is also justification by the heart (*qolb*) and mind (*aql*) and recognition by the tongue (oral) is also shown through deeds and practices (charity).<sup>10</sup>

The next thing is someone who has a different background from the previous figure; Wilfred Cantwell Smith was an orientalist and most important contributor in interfaith dialogue and comparative study of religions in the West. He was the founder of the Institute of Islamic Studies in McGill. He also pioneered the study of religions at Harvard, and moved there to hold a position as director. In addition he also wrote a lot of books, especially in the field of religion, one of the discussions was about the terminology of religion which according to him is very problematic, ambiguous, controversial and invites polemic and endless questions, to the level where a person may not be able to give a definition of this term definitively,

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<sup>6</sup>Yuangga Kurnia Yahya, "Fenomena Kekerasan Atas Nama Agama di Indonesia", in *Kalimah*, Vol. 15, No. 2, (Gontor: Universitas Darussalam Gontor, 2017), 213.

<sup>7</sup>M. Quraish Syihab, *Islam yang Saya Anut: Dasar-dasar Ajaran Islam*, (Tangerang: PT Lentera Hati, 2017), 100.

<sup>8</sup>Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *Filsafat dan Praktek Pendidikan Islam Syed Muhammad Naquib Al Attas*, Terj. Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, dkk, (Bandung: Mizan, Cet. I, 2003), 51.

<sup>9</sup>Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *Filsafat dan Praktek Pendidikan ...*, 51.

<sup>10</sup>Syed M Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993), 72.

convincing and mutually agreed upon.<sup>11</sup>

Departing from the background as described above is interesting enough to explore and examine the thinking of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas as a Muslim scholar who has the concept of Islamic worldview with Wilfred Cantwell Smith, an Orientalist who sparked the idea of world theology in interpreting Islam. That is why the writer will make a comparison of the thoughts of both figures that have different backgrounds.

#### Islam According to Syed M Naquib Al Attas

According to Al-Attas Islam is the only religion of the original revelation and its name has been given by Allah SWT, and those who follow this religion are praised by Allah SWT as the best among mankind. Therefore, Islam is not merely a verb which means a postwar, it is also the name of a religion describing the correct way of being, as well as explaining the definition of religion (generally); to God.<sup>12</sup> And the statement is supported by Adian Husaini that among the religions, Islam is a religion whose name is specifically mentioned in his holy book. And the names of religions other than Islam are given by religious observers or by humans; such as Judaism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, religion of Kongucu, Shintoism, Jainism, etc.<sup>13</sup> While Islam is not the same. The name Islam is the name of a religion handed down to the Prophet Muhammad Saw, already mentioned in the Qur'an in the chapter Ali Imran verse 85 which reads:

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

Whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, they will not be accepted (the religion) thereof, and he in the hereafter including those who are losers<sup>14</sup>

Islam is a religion of *tanzil* (revelation) that has not changed in terms of doctrine and beliefs since it was first handed down to the prophet. End of the future. Islam is not the result of fiction, meditations, and theories of wisdom. Of course, it is also not the great result of human copyrights as well as culture. The Fundamentals of

<sup>11</sup>Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End Religion*, (New York: Mentor Books, 1964), 33.

<sup>12</sup>Syed M. Naquib Al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1995), 125.

<sup>13</sup>Adian Husaini, *10 Kuliah Agama Islam Panduan Menjadi Cendekiawan Mulia dan Bahagia*, (Yogyakarta: Pro-U Media, 2016), 21-22.

<sup>14</sup>Q.S Al-Imran: 85.

Islamic religion and religious worship are revealed in Al-Quran al-Karim and Hadith as the revelation given by God to his Messenger.<sup>15</sup>

Thus Islam is a harmonious relationship between the soul and the body; He is submission and loyalty (*Ta'ah*) to Allah SubhanahuwaTa'ala and also to the Prophet Muhammad Sallallahu 'alaihiwasallam; It is the testimony with a wholeheartedly to the truth (*Kalimah Syahadah*), that is the witness that no God but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, Islam has a sense of belief (faith) and also submission in devotion. Islam is a justification by heart and mind and confession by the tongue is also demonstrated by deed and practice. As explained by the priest, al-Ghozali, there is a relationship between Islam and faith, because basically, faith is part of the most major practices, whereas Islam if translated is self-employed, whether by Oral or other limbs. And the best self-effort is with the heart, it is also referred to as "*Tashdiq*" in other words is "faith".<sup>17</sup>

Besides, if we look at the original default as "*Din*", Islam puts itself integral to the construction of a city (Medina) as an effort to create the appropriate culture and civilization as well as a means of harvesting the mandate Man as Caliph,<sup>18</sup> as Sayyed Hossen Nasr said Islam is a religion and civilization, a historical reality that spans more than fourteen centuries of human history and geographical abundance in a vast area that stretches across the Asian and African continents and even parts of Europe.<sup>19</sup> All of that we can see in the history where Islam has portrayed his civilization in the form of various achievements in the law, Politics, Urbanity, economics, the way of society, philosophy, technology, and agriculture.<sup>20</sup> Thus the Islamic civilization can be called a superhuman-material, idealistic-realistic, divine-humanitarian, morality-the urbanity and individual social. This is a balanced and medieval civilization (*al-Tawazunwa al-Wasatiyyah*), built on it a medieval people, as the Lord has in Sura Al-Baqarah verses 143:

<sup>15</sup>Syed M. Naquib Al-Attas, *Risalah untuk Kaum Muslimin*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 2001), 65.

<sup>16</sup>Syed M. Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism...*, 89.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid*, 88.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid*, 64-66.

<sup>19</sup>Sayyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam: Religion History and Civilization*, (New York, US: HarperCollins, e-book version, 2007), vii.

<sup>20</sup>More details see, Salma Khadra Jayyusi, (Ed), *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, (Leiden: E.J. BRILL, 1992).

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

And so (also) we have made you (the Muslims), a righteous people and the choice that you are a witness to the (deeds) of man and that the Apostle (Muhammad) be a witness of your deeds. And we do not set up the qibla that is your right (now) but so that we know (to be real) who follows the apostle and who defected. And indeed (the transfer of Qibla) was very heavy, except for those who had been instructed by God; And God will not waste your faith. Indeed, Allah is one of the most merciful to mankind.<sup>21</sup>

As summarized by Quraisy Shihab in his book Islam has several characteristics in his teachings, among others is; deity, humanity, universal, moderation, realistic, clarity, and not incriminating.<sup>22</sup>

And several factors make Islam as a civilization, which is the existence of transmission of vision and belief. Where the belief in the form of polytheism turns into *Tawhid*, from the worship of mankind to the worship of God only, from serving to stones, statues, and idols to worship the untouchable God of hand and cannot be seen by the senses. Then there are also scientific transmissions and methodological transmissions that play an important role in the movement of human thought and civilization in general, because without any method of purpose difficult to reach even though the business has been largely issued.

### *Islam According to Wilfred Cantwell Smith*

As I shall try to show, there are some misinterpretations in certain Islamic literature on the world Islam by giving new meanings to certain terms and ignoring clear-cut verses from the Quran and Hadits which have confounded the writings of ancient and modern writers. In short they, "Displace words from their right places and meanings" as the Quran in said in an-Nisa 46, described the ancient Jewish scholars. For example, Smith states that the word Islam has three meanings: "Submission; the empirical reality of the world of

<sup>21</sup>Q.S Al-Baqarah: 143

<sup>22</sup>M. Quraish Syihab, *Islam yang Saya Anut...*, 110-115.

Islam as it exists sociologically"; and the ideal Muslim community in a historical sense.<sup>23</sup> He strongly rejects the meaning of the word Islam as the name of the religion revealed to the prophet Muhammad. He claims that Muslims, like Christians and the followers of other religions,<sup>24</sup> have gradually changed the meanings of religious terms as they became more conscious of themselves as a separate religious group and became more devoted to in-group feelings than to the original faith. Moreover, he argues that it is only recently (19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries) that the term Islam has established itself as the name of religion. On the contrary, the religion of Islam, from the very start was already mature and was in no need of the process of maturation. As a revealed religion, Islam is conscious of itself from the very beginning; it originated from divine revelation not from circumstances of history.

In refusing to accept the meaning of the word Islam as the name of the religion revealed to Prophet Muhammad and practically limiting it to a vague concept of submission, Smith and such scholars as Frithjof Schoun and Jane Smith wished to bring Islam under the broad umbrella of the unity of religions. In doing so, as we have already mentioned, they go against the clear meanings of Quranic verses and Hadits and confuse obvious reality with an intellectual and pedantic smoke screen.

As an example, Smith says that Muslims and outsiders may disagree as to what Islam is. They may come together in discussing how specific persons at certain times and places have understood it.<sup>25</sup> confusion. In this, the author refers again to Smith as he proposes to perform intensive research to unearth the evolution of the meaning of the word Islam. He states:

*"The fundamentally rewarding task would be to make a study of the history of the word Islam to discover the evolution of its usage and the meaning over the centuries and the variety of connotations that it has evinced in the course of its historical development. We have been recently reminded that the history of the Muslim religion has yet to be written."*<sup>26</sup>

The history of the Muslim religion has yet to be written should not be acceptable because Islam is not a historical religion that has undergone a historical process of evolution in line with changing

<sup>23</sup>Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *On Understanding Islam*, (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1981), 174.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid*, 48.

<sup>25</sup>Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *On Understanding Islam...*, 49.

<sup>26</sup>Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *On Understanding Islam...*, 46

circumstances. Indeed, as a revealed religion, Islam was already complete from the period of its inception. However, this completeness refers to the meaning attributed to the term Islam which came to be the name of the religion as well. If, however, later generations of Muslims deviate from the complete Quranic understanding, this will be similar to what the adherents of other distorted religions did to their religions, and as such the distorted understanding of Islam cannot be taken as a development over and above the original complete meaning with which Islam was endowed by the Quran.

However, it must be obvious that such an invented confusion cannot cloud the striking clarity of Qur'anic verses denouncing the shirk of Christianity, Judaism, and other pagan religions nor can this confusion cloud the Quranic verses unequivocally saying that "those who seek a religion other than Islam will not be accepted by God or that the true din accepted by God is Islam. To get around these problems, scholars who uphold the belief in a transcendent unity of religions avoid speaking about some verses and misinterpret others.

Of interest in this respect is the way Smith changes the meaning of the Quranic verse of Al-Imran 3;19 so that it will enhance his position. he boldly writes:

*"I do not necessarily find a systematic, institutionalized sense even in the classic verses where it is customary nowadays to see the religion as being named. Inna al-dinaindaAllahi al-Islam may be read as stating the essential religious truth that the proper way to worship God is to obey him. I will not, however, repeat here my reason supporting this and similar interpretations. One may assert, however, that there is no instance in the Quran where the dynamic sense of the term as personal faith is patently absurd or grammatically intolerable".<sup>27</sup>*

What Smith is saying is that since Islam is nothing more than submission and since all religions profess some form of submission, then no religion can be properly called a religion without being a form of Islam or submission. The expression ' the proper way to worship God' necessarily implies improper ways of worshipping him and such improper ways of worshipping him amount to disobeying him. This means that there are other ways of worshipping God that are not proper and that there is only one way that is proper which is given the name of al-Islam because the form of submission (al-Islam) is true to the command of God and approved by him. There are two forms

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid, 47.

of submission the willing and true kind (*taw'an*) which follows the way of the prophets, and the unwilling and false kind (*farhan*) which follows the inventions of the various religious traditions which do not emulate the way of the prophets.

To further support his stand, Smith states that it was only recently (19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries) that Islam had incontestably become the chosen term to signify both a religion and a type of politico-social involvement. He claims that the usage and meaning of the word Islam have undergone the process of evolution over the centuries. Accordingly, he concludes that the religion of Islam is no longer in its true, original form but, rather has taken a reified sense. This statement is strongly supported by Toshihiko Izutsu:

“But by far the most important of all the concepts belonging in this class is the concept of Islam itself, not, of course, in the sense of the historical, objective religions culture known as Islam- Islam as a result of the process of ‘reification’, but Islam in the original sense of the determined self-submission, self-surrendering to the divine will, i.e. a decisive step taken by each person and existential problem, towards resigning his soul to God”.<sup>28</sup>

To prove his view, Smith has produced several arguments, such as Islam get much less attention than iman in the Quran, its use has a ratio of one to five, and the title Islam in the works of very early Muslim scholars are considerably less common than today.<sup>29</sup> His thesis eventually leads the reader to accept his conviction that Islam as the name of a particular religion is a comparatively new development and that the term means religious submission in its general sense.

To develop his arguments, Smith found it necessary to prove to the readers that the Quran and the works of the very early Muslims scholars used iman for referring to the religion revealed to the prophet, whereas the term Islam was used to referring to submission in general terms (individual submission) only. To anyone who reads and understands the Quran, this is an obvious falsification of the Quranic text.

He even goes on to use statistics to support his thesis, as he states that the ratio of the term iman to Islam in the Quran and the works of very early Muslim scholars were statistically very significant in comparison to modern Islamic literature. According to these statics,

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<sup>28</sup>Toshihiko Izutsu, *God And Man In The Quran*, (Tokyo: The Kelo Institute of Culture and Linguistic Studies, 1964), 199.

<sup>29</sup>Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *On Understanding Islam...*, 50.

The ratio of the term iman to Islam in the Quran is as much as five to one. Therefore, he concludes:

*“During these centuries, Islam slightly outnumbered iman in titles, in the ratio was one to five, in favor of iman (faith). In modern times, this ratio changes to over thirteen to one. That is, Islam gets much less attention than iman in the Quran, gradually comes to get lightly more attention as Islamic history proceeds, and today is vastly more considered”.*<sup>30</sup>

The use of the term Islam and iman in the Quran, hadiths of the prophet and the works of the early Muslim scholars was synonymous and interchangeable and that the term Islam was mentioned as the name of the religion revealed to the prophet.

Smith appears to be critical and straight forward against the conventional Christian and Western secular viewpoints on religion. In refusing to accept the meaning of the word Islam as the name of the religion revealed to Prophet Muhammad and practically limiting it to a vague concept of submission, Smith projects his deconstructive insight on the concept of Islam. Smith wishes to bring Islam under the global of religions and the religious pluralism. The meaning of Islam includes within itself not only the verbal noun meaning but its understanding as to the name and definition of the religion as well. The originality of this idea is more reflected in its tenet that Islam, as the name of this religion, did not unfold itself to become other than what it was, and in line with changing circumstances, through the consciousness of its adherents throughout its history. We maintain that Islam as a religion is not merely a set of rules of laws, and neither is it restricted only to rituals, but it covers every sphere of life in which tawhid serves as the bedrock of submission.

As a religion. Islam is complete in its fundamental outlook from the very beginning. All the essentials of the religion of Islam, such as the name, the faith, and practice, the rituals, the creed and system of belief are revealed in the Quran which is eternally absolute. Accordingly, there is no place for the evolution of major conceptions of belief and belief in Islam. These basic concepts do not undergo the process of change which clerics proclaim in other religions.

### *The Similarities in the Meaning of Islam*

Both of these figures Al-Attas and Smith explained the meaning of the word Islam by looking at the meaning of the language taken

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<sup>30</sup>Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *On Understanding Islam...*, 50.

from the word “*aslama*” which means surrender. Both agreed that Islam contained the meaning of surrender to God, although there were still differences between the two of them on how the surrender, where Al-Attas explained that the surrender of the entire outer and inner self only to Allah by obeying all His orders and away from the prohibition, and it is exercised whole heartedly with the absolute obedience to the law revealed by him.<sup>31</sup> while Smith explained the meaning of Islam without limiting the manner of surrender, because he thought that all religions should lead to the process of surrender and that is a personal experience of every religious person, It is the faith that unites a free moral offender with its creator without questioning how he or she would surrender to his lord.<sup>32</sup>

Then in the function and purpose of the existence of religion itself, namely to improve the moral of each human being able to behave well to anyone and anything, both human and animal, because it is in every religious teachings have always taught Good behavior, both Islam and others.

But it is only a false-commonality, because it is really good to do not have to rely on religion, it has become human and is a common ethic of this life, that we must help each others, and help people who are in trouble.

While speaking about ethic and morality there will be a difference between the two, related to the source from the ethics, which in western history has changed the conception of a radically changing value, starting from acceptance of Church ethics, until the west finally abolished metaphysics in moral ethics.<sup>33</sup> And the debate about ethics in the West has sued religion as a source of morality and a solution to philosophical issues in the west.

While ethics in the view of Al-Attas is a part of religion and centered on the psychology of the human psyche, individual self, and its circle is related to political and social life.<sup>34</sup> And the rational soul of man can recognize both good and bad, and distinguish the truth from falsehood when trained and developed in true science and

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<sup>31</sup>Syed M. Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1993) 78

<sup>32</sup>Wilfred C Smith, *The Meaning And End Religion...*, 194.

<sup>33</sup>Dinar Dewi Kania, “*Konsep Nilai dalam Peradaban Barat*”, in *Tsaqafah: Jurnal Pemikiran dan Peradaban Islam*, Vol. 9, No. 2, (Gontor: Institut Studi Islam Darussalam Gontor, 2013), 260.

<sup>34</sup>Syed M Naquib al-Attas, *On Justice and the Nature of Men*, (Kuala Lumpur: IBFIM, 2015), 11.

straight logic.<sup>35</sup> But with regard to specific and particular matters, it is necessary for revelation that the souls of men come to the truth.

### The Differences in Al-Attas and Smith view on the meaning of Islam

Here the researcher will explain differences of opinion between Al-Attas and Smith; *first* is that Al-Attas interprets Islam as a name given by God which is a religion of revelation, therefore Islam does not mean just a verbal verb that means surrender or submission. *Second* is Islam is obedience to Allah and also the prophet Muhammad SAW and is wholehearted loyalty. *Third* is Islam implies belief (faith) which means the justification of heart and mind, confession on the tongue is also shown through deeds and charity.

The opinion of Al-Attas concerning Islam in line with the view of Toshihiko Izitsu that Islam is closely related to faith. As Muslims are characterized by a total surrender of the whole form to God, the believer is characterized by strong belief.

While Smith interprets Islam as a verbal verb without acknowledging that it is the name of an institution or a particular religious system, and if Islam is the name of a religion, it is but a process of historical development. So according to him, it is very strange if the word Islam is forced its meaning into a religious system name because such meaning is the result of historical development.

It is similar to the opinion of Muhammad Syahrur in his explanation of the meaning of Islam, namely as a gesture of recognizing the existence of God, faith in the last day, and righteous deeds. Whoever has these three traits, he is referred to as a Muslim without seeing whether he belongs to the followers of the Prophet Muhammad, the Prophet Moses, Prophet Isa or another follower of the path of truth outside the three Semitic traditions.<sup>36</sup>

And the above opinion is also supported by Budhy Munawar Rachman based on the verses of the Quran on the letter of Al-Baqoroh verses 62, which reads;

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, 12.

<sup>36</sup>Syamsi Wal Qomar, "Kritik Makna Islam dalam perspektif Orientalis dan Liberal", in *Kalimah*, Vol.13, No. 1, (Gontor: Universitas Darussalam Gontor, 2015), 161.

“Indeed, the believers, the Jews, the Christians and the Shabiin people, who are among those who have faith in God, a day later and righteous deeds, they will receive the reward of their lord, there is no concern for them, and neither do they grieve.”<sup>37</sup>

He said that this verse illustrates the existence of salvation in religions (whatever the religion) that depends on the three universal values mentioned in the above verse, namely faith in Allah, the last day and charity, which means that all religions Can be called Islam, whatever his name and all the religious believers had the opportunity to enter heaven.<sup>38</sup>

## Conclusion

Based on the deep research above, the researcher can formulate some conclusions are; that Islam according to Al Attas is a word that is directly chosen by God to describe the meaning of religion. Where he defines the word religion with *Din*, that meaning is submission or more precisely the state of being indebted to its existence in this world. In other words that the word *Din* means self-awareness of the indebted state. And it is fitting for someone who is aware that he has debts in order to pay them according to the creditor. And here Allah made the rule with the name of Shari’ah which is the pillars of Islam, the creed, prayers, Zakat, fasting, and Hajj if able and many more teachings found in the Qur’an and Hadith, and it is all acceptable on the condition of having faith Allah as the creditor. And that means that the word Islam is not only meaningful as a submission but also there must be awareness and faith in Allah which will be the meaning of a good behavior or morality that is *ihsan*.

But according to Smith, Islam is the same word as the other, such as Buddhist, Hindu, etc. taken from the name of his subordination after passing away. And the word Islam is experiencing a development as the progress of the history as with what happened to the religion terminology according to Smith, it means that Islam is not a name of religion that is chosen by God, but only a word that means submission and applies to all mankind where all can be called as Muslims if he is to surrender to his lord without looking at his or her ritual. And it all resulted in the emergence of the understanding

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<sup>37</sup>Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 62

<sup>38</sup>Budhy Munawar-Rachman, *Argumen Islam Untuk Pluralisme*, (Jakarta: Grasindo, 2010), 123.

of religious pluralism in which all religions are the same to teach a goodness.

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