

An Assessment of the Typology of World Religions: Perspective of Muslim Scholars

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ABSTRACT

The classification of world religions has long been a subject of scholarly inquiry due to the diversity of religious beliefs, practices, and historical developments. The complexity of religious traditions has resulted in different approaches to typology, with some scholars classifying religions according to their origin, geographical distribution, sacred texts, or the numerical strength of their adherents. Muslim scholars also made significant contributions to this field through systematic studies of religious traditions. This paper examines the typology of world religions from the perspective of prominent classical Muslim scholars, particularly Al-Bīrūnī, Ibn Hazm, and Al-Shahrastānī, highlighting their methods of classification and the intellectual principles underlying their approaches. It further assesses the relevance of these classical Muslim typologies in understanding contemporary religious pluralism and interreligious relations. The study adopts an analytical and historical approach, drawing on classical Islamic sources and relevant contemporary literature. It concludes that the contributions of Muslim scholars provide a comprehensive and balanced framework for the study of world religions and remain valuable for promoting scholarly understanding and constructive engagement in today's religiously diverse societies.

Keywords: Religious Typology, Muslim Scholars, World Religions, Traditional Religion, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam

INTRODUCTION

Based on some estimates, today, there are roughly more than four thousand religious traditions that are believed to have existed in the globe.¹ This is because; religion means different things to different people of different perspectives. Different people therefore, had categorized religious traditions of the world into different classifications. However, in the following paragraphs, a brief review was made on the concept of religious typology and some examples of how religions of the world were classified, especially by the Western scholars. After which emphasis was given to the perspective of Muslim scholars' consideration for proper understanding of modern concept of religious pluralism and interreligious relations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Typology of Religions

The term *typology* is derived from the Greek words *typos* (type or model) and *logos* (study), meaning a system of dividing things into different types.² In respect to the study of religion, typology serves as an analytical tool that helps scholars compare and understand the similarities and differences among religious traditions. Thus, typology of world religions in this regard can be referred to the systematic classification of religions into

¹ https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/list_of_religions_and_spiritual_traditions

² Hornsby, A. S. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Oxford University Press, Eight Edition, 2015, p.1612.

distinct categories based on shared characteristics such as their origin, beliefs, scriptures, concept of the divine, rituals, ethical systems, historical development, and geographical distribution.³

There is no universally accepted typology of world religions because religions are complex, dynamic, and diverse. As briefly stated in the introduction of this paper, different scholars have proposed various classification systems depending on the objectives of their studies. This typology as indicated by Kamaruzaman may be specifically expressed in the form of classification or categorization. In cases where it is not stated precisely, it may be inherent in the way they organize and arrange the contents of their works, because most of the scholars of comparative religions have a typology of religion in their minds before they begin their work.⁴ Some classify religions according to origin, distinguishing between revealed (prophetic) and natural religions; others classify them according to belief in God, such as monotheistic, polytheistic, henotheistic, pantheistic, or non-theistic religions. Other classifications are based on geographical or cultural origin, such as Abrahamic, Indian (Dharmic), East Asian, and indigenous African religions. Contemporary scholars also classify religions according to historical development, sacred scriptures, or the number of adherents.⁵

Examples of some Typology of Religion

Classification on the Basis of Origin and Geographical Location

A careful assessment of the works, especially of some Western writers, can be observed to classify religions of the world into different categories. The works such as '*A guide to the World's Religion*' by David G. Bradley; '*Religions East and West*' by Ward J. Fellows; and others illustrate that religions of the world are of three categories based on origin and geographical affiliation or on the basis of language inclination. In other words, this categorization is mostly anthropological and sociological in nature. These are as follows:

Primitive Religions

These are religions of primitive people such as religions of Mesopotamia, Amerindian religions, African religions and Shamanism among others. They were characterized as those who were not civilized, not developed a written language. Food is obtained by fishing and hunting and there is minimum knowledge and use of agriculture. The society is characterized by group behavior and a little or no social stratification.⁶ Their religion is mainly on belief in spirits and great variety of gods and goddesses. Sometimes the gods were in animal form or were identified with and symbolic of the regularities of nature; sometimes they were human in their characteristics but, unlike human beings, they were immortal.⁷

In the same vein, i.e. to the meaning of primitive religions, Awolalu upheld that traditional religion in Nigeria is the same with African Traditional religion, which is popularly known by some writers as African indigenous religion. It is the indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the Africans. It is the religion which resulted from the sustaining faith held by the forebears of the present Africans, and which is being practiced today in various forms and various shades and intensities by a very large number of Africans, including some individuals who are somehow Christians or even Muslims. Awolalu therefore concluded that the traditional religious practices of the three major ethnic groups, namely: Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo represent the dimension of African traditional religion in Nigeria.⁸

³ Crawford, Robert *What is Religion?* Routledge, London, 2002.

⁴ Kamaruzaman, Kamar Oniah *Early Muslim Scholarship in Religionswissenschaft: The Works and Contributions of Abu Rayhan Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Al-Biruni*, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), 2003, p.80.

⁵ However, some writers only document the religions of the world on alphabetical order. For example, Eliade had written a book on 33 major world religions according to alphabet. For detail explanation see: Eliade, Mircea; Couliano, Ioan P. and Wiesner, Hillary S. *The Eliade Guide to World Religions*, Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 1991.

⁶ Bradley, David G. *A Guide to the World Religion*, Prentice Hall, U.S.A., 1963, p.12.

⁷ Fellows, Ward J. *Religions East and West*, Holt Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1979, p.16.

⁸ Awolalu, Joseph Omosade "What is African Traditional Religion?", *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Vol. 10, NO. 2, 1976

Religions of Biblical Lands or Near Eastern Salvation:

According to this category, in the semiarid land known as the Near East, there were major nations which include Palestine, the Arabian Peninsula, and Iran. In other words, the Hebrews, Phoenicians, Babylonians, Assyrians, and to some extent the Egyptians, employed Semitic speech; a term believed to have been taken from the name of one of the sons of Prophet Noah (A.S.), Shem as highlighted by Naik.⁹ These areas witnessed the rise of four world living religions. These are Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam. According to the perspective of this categorization, these religions have some certain basic characteristics in common. For instance, the God is conceived as the Creator of the world and the final judge and savior of the men He has created; the only true God and worship of any other god is condemned as apostasy.¹⁰

The Religions of India and China or Eastern Salvation:

In this category, religious traditions include Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Shintoism were raised in the geographical area of Indian subcontinent and China. Some of these religions – not all – have some common concepts. Samsara,¹¹ Karma,¹² Nirvana¹³ and Moksha¹⁴ are used to describe the nature of man's plight in the concept of rebirth or incarnation in Indian religions. As for the religions of China, they are monistic and philosophical in nature; the concept of deity is not perceived, but ancestor worship is prevailed. Thus, Naik suggested that they are better referred to as ethical systems rather than as religions.¹⁵

Classification on the Basis of Number of Adherents

Another classification of world religions can be deduced from the report released by Pew Research Center, on global religious demographic study carried out by the Center.¹⁶ However, it is important to note that the Center's report mostly represents sociological approach. The report revealed that more than eight in ten people were identified with a religious group worldwide. It estimates that there are 6.12 billion religiously affiliated adults and children around the globe, representing 84% of the 2015 world population of 7.3 billion.¹⁷ Based on the above, the Center categorized the world religions into eight according to the mere approximate number of the followers as follows:

1. Christianity – 31.2% (2.3 billion population) globally.
2. Islam – 24.1% (1.8 billion population) globally.¹⁸
3. Unaffiliated¹⁹ – 16% (1.2 billion population) globally.

⁹ Naik, Zakir Abdulkarim *Concept of God in Major Religions*, Islamic Research Foundation (IRF), n.d, p.3.

¹⁰ Bradley, *A Guide to the World Religion*, p.22.

¹¹ Samsara means 'to move across', or 'to wander', and is used to convey the concept of transmigration, of passing from one existence to another. Bradley, *A Guide to the World Religion*, p.83.

¹² The word 'Karma' is cognate to the word 'create' and refers to that which one does, one's personal thoughts and actions. In this context, what one does with the totality of his present life determines the nature of his rebirth. In other word, the level of his birth as beast, insect or man, his good fortune or evil lot, are all determined by his previous lives and accumulated Karma. Bradley, *A Guide to the World Religion*, p.83.

¹³ Nirvana means going out, waning away, or loss of selfhood. In Indian religions, the goal of life is to cease to be reborn, to achieve Nirvana. Bradley, *A Guide to the World Religion*, p.84.

¹⁴ Moksha means spiritual freedom or to obtain release from Samsara.

¹⁵ Naik, *Concept of God in Major Religions*, p.3.

¹⁶ Hackett, Conrad et al, "*The Global Religious Landscape: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Major Groups as of 2010*", Pew Research Center, Washington D.C., December, 2012.

¹⁷ This information was from the additional report released by the Center titled: "*The Changing Global Religious Landscape*", April, 2017, via: www.pewresearch.org.

¹⁸ This population of global religious affiliation shows that, only 1.8 billion people are Muslims representing only 24.1% of the globe. On the other hand, 5.5 billion people around the globe are non-Muslims representing 75.9%. This interprets; almost one-in-four people are Muslims worldwide. However, this does not negate the essence of Islam. It is a common nature of Islam as a true religion. Very few accept the truth, whereas the majorities follow their whims and caprices. We pray the Almighty Allah to always make us among the truthful followers of Islam, Amin.

¹⁹ The religiously unaffiliated include atheists, agnostics and people who do not identify with any particular religion. However, according to the report, many of the religiously unaffiliated have some religious beliefs, like belief in God or a higher power; attending some certain kinds of religious practices, such: as annual religious services and worship at a graveside or tomb. As such, we decided to include the groups and named as religiously unaffiliated.

4. Hinduism – 15% (1.1 billion population) globally.
5. Buddhism – 6.9% (0.5 billion population) globally.
6. Folk religions²⁰ – 5.7% (0.4 billion population) globally.
7. Other religions²¹ – 0.8% (0.1 billion population) globally.
8. Judaism – 0.2% (0.01 billion population) globally.

However, according to online Wikipedia source which shows that, as of 2020 there was about 7.79 billion world population. The source estimates that, almost 84.42 percent are religiously affiliated; whereas 15.58 percent are religiously unaffiliated. The following is the percentage distribution as depicted by the source: Christianity – 31.11%; Islam – 24.90%; Religiously Unaffiliated – 15.58%; Hinduism – 15.16%; Buddhism – 6.62%; Folk Religions – 5.61% and Other Religions – 0.79%.²²

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts historical and analytical methods in the collection and analysis of data. It examines the perspectives of three classical Muslim scholars—Al-Bīrūnī, Ibn Ḥazm, and Al-Shahrastānī—whose works constitute significant contributions to the study and classification of world religions.

The analysis of Al-Bīrūnī's thought is based primarily on Kamaruzaman's scholarly study of his contributions to the comparative study of religions, owing to its accessibility and comprehensive treatment of the subject. Ibn Ḥazm's views are examined through Ghulam Haidar Aasi's critical study of *Kitāb al-Faṣl fī al-Milal wa al-Aḥwā' wa al-Niḥal*. In contrast, Al-Shahrastānī's *Al-Milal wa al-Niḥal* is consulted directly as the primary source for analyzing his classification of religions. To complement these classical sources, the study also undertakes a critical review of relevant contemporary literature on the typology and classification of world religions. The collected data are analyzed comparatively to identify the methodological approaches, similarities, and differences in the scholars' perspectives on the typology of world religions.

Perspective of Muslim Scholars

Muslim scholars put forward their efforts in categorizing the world's religions. Among the early Muslim scholars who have written something about the study of world religions include: Al-Bīrūnī (362/973 – 443/1051), Ibn Hazm (384/994 – 456/1064) and Al-Shahrastānī (479/1086 – 548/1153). Even though, their own typology represents the period they have witnessed, it serves as a guide for the contemporary Muslims. The following paragraphs briefly highlight their consideration on the typology of world's religions.

Al-Bīrūnī

Al-Bīrūnī makes a general statement in his method of religious typology. According to him, whatever exceeds the limits of the truth, *al-haqq* (i.e., Islam), is a deviation; and unbelief (*al-kufr*) as quoted by Kamaruzaman that:

For verily that which exceeds the proper limits of the truth, *al-haqq* (Islam), is a deviation; and unbelief (*kufr*) in form and essence is one and the same in point of swerving from it (i.e., from the truth).²³

²⁰ Folk religions according to the report refers to adherence of various folk religions including African traditional religions, Chinese folk religions, Native American religions and Australian aboriginal religions among others.

²¹ This is an umbrella category that includes Baha'ism, Jainism, Sikhism, Taoism, Shintoism, Tenrikyo, Wicca, Zoroastrianism and many other smaller religions.

²² <https://en.wikipedia.org>, List of Religious Populations, retrieved on 4th October, 2021.

²³ Kamaruzaman, *Early Muslim Scholarship in Religionswissenschaft: The Works and Contributions of Abu Rayhan Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Al-Biruni*, pp.80-81.

From the above insight of his work *‘Kitab al-Hind’*, Kamaruzaman summarized his classification of religions into two²⁴ as follows:

- i. *Al-haqq* (the Truth), or Islam and
- ii. *Al-kufr* (rejection of, or deviation from the truth) or *al-inhiraf* (deviation from the truth).²⁵

The above categorization made by Al-Bīrūnī classifies all religions other than Islam as belonging to the category of disbelief; and this can be supported with a Qur’anic verse where the Almighty Allah says:

Such is Allah, your Lord in truth. So, after the truth, what else can there be, save error. How then are you turned away?²⁶

In addition to the above, Imam al-Tabari and al-Qurtabi related that Qatadah, in his interpretation of Qur’anic verse 17, *Surah al-Hajj*,²⁷ remarks that there are six religions; five are the Satanic and only one is for Al-Rahman.²⁸ This means all religions can be classified into two: namely Allah’s religion and Satan’s religion, and this is similar to the view of al-Biruni as mentioned above.

Similarly, Shaykh Uthman bn Foduye (1754-1817) in his explanation concerning the people who denounced Islam to any other religion of disbelief beside Islam shows support to the Al-Bīrūnī’s opinion. The Shaykh in his book *Nur al-Albab*, while explaining the categories of disbelievers in the Hausaland, specifically the apostates, he says:

He who was a Muslim (before), but, clearly renounced the religion of Islam, and it becomes apparent that, he renounced the religion of Islam and embraced another religion of disbelief.²⁹

Ibn Hazm

Ghulam Haider Aasi notes that Ibn Hazm classified all religious traditions and ideologies of mankind known to him into six types as follows:

1. Those who deny the existence of any facts, realities, or truths were called Sophists.
2. Those who acknowledge realities but maintain that the world is eternal and has neither any Creator nor any Providence were referred to as Naturalists, or materialists, or atheists.
3. Those who believe in the existence of realities and the world to be eternal. They also believe in its eternal providence as well.
4. Those who believe in the existence of realities but differ in their concepts of the eternity of the world. Some believe that the world is eternal and others reject this notion. Again, they agree that there is more than one Creator and Providence of the world, but differ with regard to their number.
5. Those who believe in the existence of realities hold that the world is created and has a unique and eternal Creator, but deny the existence of any prophet and reject prophecy such as Hinduism.
6. Those who believe in the existence of realities, in the creation of the world, and in One, Unique, Eternal Creator, who affirm prophecy, but differ as to who are to be accepted as prophets, and who are to be rejected³⁰ such as Jews, Christians and Muslims.

²⁴

²⁵ Kamaruzaman, *Early Muslim Scholarship in Religionswissenschaft: The Works and Contributions of Abu Rayhan Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Al-Biruni*, p.83.

²⁶ Qur’an.10:32. All translations of Qur’anic verses are taken from: Al-Hilali, Muhammad Taqi al-Din & Khan, Mmuhammad Muhsin *The Noble Qur’an English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*, King Fahad Complex, Madinah, 1427 A.H.

²⁷ The verse is read as follows: “Verily, those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Sabians, and the Christians, and the Majus, and those who worship others besides Allah; truly, Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection. Verily, Allah is over all things a Witness”. (Qur’an.22, *Surah al-Hajj*: Verse 17).

²⁸ Al-Tabari, Muhammad Jarir, *Jami’ al-Bayan fi Ta’wil al-Qur’an*, Ahmad Muhammad Shakir (Ed.), Mu’assasah al-Risalah, 1st Edition, 1420/2000, Vol.8, p.584; Al-Qurtabi, Muhammad bn Ahmad, *Al-Jami’ Al-Ahkam Al-Qur’an*, Ahmad Al-Barduni & Ibrahim Atfish (Eds.), Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyyah, Al-Qahirah, 2nd Edition, 1384/1964, Vol.12, p.23.

²⁹ Ibn Foduye, Shaykh Uthman, *Nur al-Albab*, Aliyu, Muhammad Isa, (Trans.) *Enlightening Minds*, in A. B. Yahaya (ed.) *Selected Writings of Shaykh Uthman Ibn Foduye*, Vol.3, Iqra’a Publishing House, Gusau, 2013, p.7.

Al-Shahrastānī

Al-Shahrastānī, in his book *‘al-Milal wa al-Nihal’*, broadly classified the people of the world into two groups: *ahl al-Diyanat* (religious people) and *ahl al-Ahwa’* (people of vain desire).

Ahl al-Diyanat

Ahl al-Diyanat, the religious people, are those who practice their religious tradition on the basis of a Divine scripture. They are of three categories (1) Muslims (2) *Ahl al-Kitab* (people of the book) i.e., Jews and Christians. (3) *Man lahu Shubhatu Kitab* (quasi people of the book) such as *Majus* and *al-Manawiyyah*. These three categories are those who affirm the prophecy and practice their religions originally from the teachings of their Prophets.

Ahl al-Ahwa’ wa al-Aara’

Ahl al-Ahwa’ wa al-Aara’ i.e., people of vain desire and schools of philosophy, are those who do not follow any prophetic Divine inspiration. All their laws and principles are based on reasoning and philosophy. These categories of people include early philosophers, naturalists, atheists, agnostics, materialists and idolaters.³¹

The statement of Malam Abdullahi of Gwandu (1766-1828) in his book *Diya’ul Mujahideen*, while explaining the rules and regulations concerning the *Jihad* in the cause of Allah, shows that the followers of world religions over the history can be categorized into: Muslims, *Ahl al-Kitab* i.e., Jews and Christians, *shibhu Ahl al-Kitab* i.e., *Majus* and polytheists. He said:

Of those rules also, is that Christians, Jews, and those who seemingly have a religious book like the Magians (*Majus*) are allowed to remain in their religion on the basis that they pay tribute. It is the word to which Malik, Abu Hanifa and Ahmad all agree. As to the people who have no book and those who do not seemingly have a book, such as idolaters, involving those who worship animals and inanimate things of their liking, they are not allowed to remain in their religion in order to pay tribute, and it makes no difference whether they are Arabs or foreigners. This is the pronouncement of Malik and Ahmad. However, Abu Hanifa said that tribute should be accepted from those who are foreigners.³²

Although with some slight differences, the citation of Malam Abdullahi seemingly shows some support to the view of Al-Shahrastānī. The latter’s categorization broadly classified religions on the basis of the religious scriptures in which Muslims, Christians, Jews and *Majus* are viewed on one category, i.e., people who have a certain Divine book. But, as for Malam Abdullahi, he excludes Muslims among this category. This is because, his purpose in the book is to explain the rules and regulations governing the *Jihad* and or captives, as well as the position of Islam about the non-Muslims to stay in Muslim nations.

Remarks

The Glorious Qur’an, in three different places, enumerates a certain number of religious traditions of the world. In the first and second places, i.e., in *Surah al-Baqarah* and *al-Ma’idah*, the Qur’an states four types of religion, this reads as follows:

Verily, those who believe and those who are Jews and Christians, and Sabians (*Sabi’in*), whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does righteous good

³⁰ Aasi, Ghulam Haider *Muslim Understanding of other Religions: A Study of Ibn Hazm’s Kitab al-Fisal al-Milal wa al-Ahwa’ wa al-Nihal*, IIIT, Islamabad, Pakistan, 1999, p.78.

³¹ Al-Shahrastānī, Muhammad Abdulkarim *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal*, Dar al-Fikr, Bairut Lebanon, 2005, pp.27-28.

³² Ibn Foduye, Abdullahi, *Diya’u al-Mujahideen Humatu al-Din al-Rashidin*, Luwa, Abubakar Buba (Trans.), “The Light of Mujahideen” (Fighters in the Cause of Allah) in A. B. Yahaya (ed.) *Selected Writings of Shaykh Abdullahi Ibn Foduye*, Vol.1, Iqra’a Publishing House, Gusau, 2013, p.100.

deeds shall have their reward with their Lord, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.³³

And also:

Surely, those who believe, and those who are the Jews and the Sabians and the Christians, whosoever believed in Allah and the Last Day, and worked righteousness, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.³⁴

The above two verses mentioned four types of followers of different religions, namely: believers i.e., Muslims, Jews, Christians and Sabians. In the third place, a number of six religious traditions were mentioned including an additional two from the four above, namely: *Majus* and polytheists. The verse says:

Verily, those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Sabians, and the Christians, and the *Majus*, and those who worship others besides Allah; truly, Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection. Verily, Allah is over all things a Witness.³⁵

Accordingly, the above verses interpret today's different world religious followers and their religious traditions. Those who believe refer to Muslims (followers of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ). Jews are the practitioners of Judaism (who were initially the followers of Prophet Musa A.S.). Christians are those who practice Christianity (who claim to be the followers of Prophet Isa A.S.). Sabians (are categorized into two: those who were monotheists who came before Jews and Christians; and those who were worshippers of stars, especially the ancient philosophers). *Majus* are those who believe in the existence of two deities: deity of light and deity of darkness. They were known as fire worshippers. The six category are the polytheists who worshipped idol or animate and inanimate objects as well as worshipping any spiritual being beside Allah (S.W.A.); which include among others religion of Arabian Peninsula that existed before the advent of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, African traditional religions and any other religion of idol worshipping.³⁶

In a nutshell, the above religious categorization and the consideration of Muslim scholars, revealed that Islam notices the existence of various religions, in which – according to the opinion of this paper – can be classified into divine and non-divine. The Divine religion refers to any religion based or related on the prophetic divine guidance, where all sorts of practices, worships and instructions originated from the Divine Being i.e., Allah (God). He inspired His message to the world through revelation, via some chosen favorable men called Prophets and Messengers within a period of time and or places. It started from Prophet Adam (A.S.) and ended with Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ); and it was generally known as Islam. However, in today's religious pluralism, all religions that came on this channel are called monotheistic or divine religions in modern languages, regardless of whether they were distorted by their adherents. This is because they were principally meant to worship Allah alone like Judaism and Christianity. However, this does not mean that, Islam approved the continuity of the said religions. In fact, in Islam, after the advent of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) all other religions were abrogated and thus, were null and void as it is well known in the Qur'an that "Truly, the religion with Allah is Islam..."³⁷ and also "Whoever seeks a religion other than Islam it will never be accepted of him..."³⁸

On the other hand, the non-divine religion refers to any religion based on non-prophetic divine guidance and meant to worship any being other than Allah (God), such as Jainism, Buddhism, African traditional religions and Hinduism among others. Traditional religions of Hausas, Yoruba and Igbo are examples of non-prophetic divine religions in Nigeria. Sometimes, such religions were based mainly on oral transmission upheld by fore-

³³ Qur'an.2:62.

³⁴ Qur'an.5:69.

³⁵ Qur'an.22:17

³⁶ For more explanation about origin and meaning of most of the said religions see: Sharif, Mahmud *Al-Adyan fi al-Qur'an*, Sharikatu Maktabat Ukaz, Jidda, Saudi Arabia, 1984.

³⁷ Qur'an.3:

³⁸ Qur'an.3:85.

fathers and passed on from them to succeeding generations. Also, some were not written on paper but stored in people's hearts, minds, oral history, rituals, shrines and religious functions. Allah knows the best.

CONCLUSION

From the forgoing, religions of the world are of different types. Some people as seen in the paper categorized religions of the world by mere looking at geographical location or approximate number of the followers. This paper argued that religions of the world according to Muslim understanding can be categorized either into two, namely: Islam and other religions or into six, i.e., Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Magianism, Sabianism and Polytheism. However, looking at our today's religious pluralism, the paper somehow supports the typology of al-Shahrastānī which broadly classified religions of the world into two, namely: prophetic divine religions and non-prophetic divine religions.

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