

# IBN HAZM FRAMEWORK OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION BASED ON HIS BOOK AL-FASL FI AL-MILAL WA AL-AHWA WA AL-NIHAL

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**Abstract.** Ibn Hazm was a well-known Islamic scholar and philosopher who lived in the 11th century. The aim of this research is to study the framework of Ibn Hazm in comparative religion based on his book Al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwa wa al-Nihal. It is a qualitative study focusing on Ibn Hazm's framework for the study of comparative religion. The research will use library research and textual analysis to analyze data from Al-Fasl and secondary sources such as books, journal articles, and dissertations. Ibn Hazm's approach to comparative religion is based on ten approaches. First, he emphasizes the value of reading original texts, researching the teachings and history of each religion, and understanding the historical and cultural context in which they emerged. Secondly, Ibn Hazm strives for an objective analysis of the different religions without bringing in his own prejudices or ideas. He believes that Muslim scholars before him lacked objectivity, fairness, completeness and thoroughness, which led him to create a masterpiece in the field of comparative religion. Thirdly, Ibn Hazm makes extensive use of logical reasoning in his comparative study of religions. He assesses the coherence and consistency of the justifications and methods put forward by the various religious traditions. He is factual and fair in his comparative analysis, organizing and gathering narratives that seem dissimilar from one another, then contrasting and analyzing them, emphasizing inconsistencies and contradictions. Lastly, Ibn Hazm integrates logic and revelation, believing that rational inquiry is essential for understanding and evaluating religious beliefs. He uses two methods: proving the truth of the revelation (the Qur'an) using logic and comparing Qur'anic verses with statements in distorted scriptures using logical analysis to identify distortions. Hence, this qualitative study provides valuable insights into Ibn Hazm's systematic approaches to studying comparative religion. Data collected from his masterpiece Al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwa wa al-Nihal and other sources was studied through descriptive and analytical methods.

**Keywords:** *Ibn Hazm, Al-Fasl, comparative religion, systematic approaches*

## Introduction

Abū Muhammad 'Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Sa'īd ibn Hazm (994-1064), known as Ibn Hazm, was a Muslim scholar who made significant contributions in the 11th century. In particular, he was a major figure in the founding of the Zahiri school of thought and carried out in-depth research on comparative religions. The main teaching of the Zahiri School is the importance of maintaining the literal meaning or external aspects of the texts that make up the Qur'an and hadith. Therefore, Zahiri adherents oppose all attempts to apply human reasoning, whether through analogy (qiyas), istishab, istihsan, or taqlid, in interpreting the Qur'an and hadith (Makin, 1999). His works related to

comparative religion cover key aspects such as Judaism, Christianity, the study of the prophets, Islamic theology, and Islamic ethics. One striking aspect of Ibn Hazm's contribution is his critical study of various religions, especially in challenging common assumptions in diachronic studies of the Hebrew Bible, as outlined by Berman (2019). In addition, Ahmad and Khambali (2011) argue that Ibn Hazm's approach to the study of Christianity is not limited by racial, cultural or religious prejudices, but instead carries an objective, academic, critical and controversial methodology, which is different from many modern Western scholars. The importance of Ibn Hazm's study can be understood in the context of the current development of Comparative Religion studies. Gul (2017) suggests that the comparison between contemporary Comparative Religion studies and the Muslim heritage illustrates a shift from a previously diverse and comprehensive approach to a more limited contemporary focus on refutation. Therefore, it is important to revive this legacy in order to better understand the evolving development of religious thought.

As a pioneer in comparative religious scholarship, his influence reached subsequent generations of scholars. Critical analysis of one of his monumental works, "*Al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwa wa al-Nihal*," reveals a number of important characteristics detailing Ibn Hazm's systematic approach (Laila, 1985). In essence, these main characteristics involve careful reference to the original text, application of a deep analytical and critical approach, use of logical argumentation, comparative analysis to highlight similarities and differences, integration of logic and revelation in a unity, careful polemical discourse, emphasis on historical contextualization, application of an interdisciplinary approach involving aspects of anthropology, sociology, theology, philosophy, and history, use of empirical research to support comparative analysis, and adoption of an ethical approach that promotes open dialogue and mutual respect between different religious communities. This research has a deep motivation, with the consideration that as an influential early scholar, further research on Ibn Hazm could produce a deeper understanding of his systematic approach, which in turn could guide future researchers of comparative religion.

There are numerous studies on Ibn Hazm and his masterpiece *Al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwa wa al-Nihal*. We can note that there are works that examine the biography of Ibn Hazm. The work of Mahmud Ali Himayah, *Ibn Hazm wa Manhajuhu fi Dirasat al-Adyan* (Ibn Hazm and His Methodology of Comparative Religion), deals with the biography of Ibn Hazm, his books and the peculiarities of his time. This book also describes and analyzes Ibn Hazm's views and methods on the monotheistic religions and the history of the development of comparative religion. There are several other works on this subject, such as *The Methodology of Ibn Hazm in Comparative Religion with Special Reference to His Master Piece Al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwa wa al-Nihal* by Dr. Fatmir Shehu, *Ibn Hazm on Christianity: An Analysis of His Religious Approaches* by Mahmud Ahmad and his co-authors, *Muslim understanding of other religions: An analytical study of Ibn Hazm's Kitab Al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwa wa al-Nihal* by Aasi (1999), and *Muslim views of Jews and Judaism in the Medieval Period: A Comparative Study of Ibn Hazm and al-Shahrastānī* by Aamir Bashir. In all these works, Ibn Hazm's views on religions other than Islam are presented in descriptive, historical and analytical form, as well as in several other approaches that go into an in-depth analysis of these religions.

Thirdly, there are also studies on Ibn Hazm and his works in the fields of logic, science, philosophy, ethics and Islamic law. These works include Ibn Hazm's views on

Islamic ethics with special reference to the Kitab al-Akhlaq wa-al-Siyar by Zakariya (2020), Ibn Hazm by Cordova on logic by Anwar G. Chejne, scientific contributions by Ibn Hazm by Abdi O. Shuriye and Abdulazeez Femi Salami, Ibn Hazm's philosophy and thoughts on science by Professor Salim Al-Hassani and comments on Ibn Hazm's rejection of analogy (qiyas) in matters of religious law by Fadel I. Abdallah. These works deal with Ibn Hazm's views and methods in specific areas such as theology, Islamic law, history, ethics, science, philosophy and other related subjects. It has been seen that his systematic approaches in his work Al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwa wa al-Nihal are partially mentioned by researchers, but there is no study that examines his systemic approaches in a single study. Therefore, such a study is needed.

## **Materials and Methods**

This research approaches qualitative aspects and is in-depth, relying on library research methods. The main data source is Ibn Hazm's "Al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwa wa al-Nihal", as well as secondary sources involving books, journal articles and dissertations that are relevant to this study. The data collection and analysis process will be carried out through a textual analysis approach, which utilizes analytical and historical methods as applied by Ibn Hazm in his work. This approach aims to investigate the structure and context of the text, identify the research methods applied by Ibn Hazm, and understand the critical concepts that underlie his analysis of religions. By combining text analysis methodology with a historical approach, this research seeks to understand Ibn Hazm's views from a more comprehensive perspective, creating a strong methodological foundation for understanding his contributions and systematic thinking in comparative religion.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Comparative religion***

The systematic approaches of Ibn Hazm were examined with particular reference to his Al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwa wa al-Nihal. It was found that Ibn Hazm developed various systems for the study of comparative religion. This research identified ten systemic approaches of Ibn Hazm in his Al-Fasl.

### ***Referring to original text***

Ibn Hazm emphasized the importance of reading the original texts, researching the teachings and history of each religion, and understanding the historical and cultural context in which they originated. Mahmud Ali Himayah mentioned that Ibn Hazm's system was to refer to the original texts of Islamic law. Similarly, if he adopted views from the Gospel, he would denounce the interpretation of the churchmen and refer directly to the original text. According to Ibn Hazm, the churchmen could make mistakes in their interpretations (Himayah, 1983). He was very particular about quoting from arbitrary sources and adopting views on arbitrary topics. He was able to study the original texts for critical analysis or comparative discussion.

### ***Analytical and critical approach***

Ibn Hazm endeavored to make an objective analysis of the various religions. He tried to understand the teachings and practices of each religion on its own terms, without bringing in his own prejudices or preconceptions (Laila, 1985). Fatmir Shehu mentions that Ibn Hazm's approach to the study of comparative religion differs from that of Muslim scholars before him. Several Muslim scholars who had conversations with people practicing other religions in general and with Christians and Jews in particular were not clearly objective, which Ibn Hazm was not satisfied with. According to Ibn Hazm, the writings of Muslim theologians before him lacked objectivity, fairness, completeness and thoroughness. Therefore, he decided to create a masterpiece in the field of comparative religion that was transparent, objective, fair and comprehensive (Shehu, 2013). Thus, Ibn Hazm's approach was to study comparative religion with objectivity, fairness and comprehensiveness. Ibn Hazm explained in the introduction of his book *Al-Fasl* the purpose for which he was led to study religions and sects. He said:

*Many people wrote books and articles about various religions, but many of them made either too long or too short studies without having proper constructive critical approach, analysis and discussion with proper objectivity. He wrote about sects and religions with a scientific-critical approach, not just in the form of narration of historical facts, as some researchers did in historical issues, but rather he used the method of analysis and criticism and showing the invalidity of their beliefs (Jadawi, 2013).*

### ***Logical reasoning***

Ibn Hazm made extensive use of logical reasoning in his comparative study of religions. He applied logical principles to evaluate the coherence and consistency of the justifications and methods put forward by different religious traditions. He was very objective and fair in his comparative study of religions. In his book *Al-Fasl*, he often used this system when comparing conflicting views between Islam and Christianity or Judaism. According to Himayah, anyone who reads Ibn Hazm's book *Al-Fasl* will understand the importance he attaches to logical reasoning (Himayah, 1983). "Ibn Hazm believes that the science of logic ('ilm al-mantiq) is the balance (mizān) or standard (mi'yār) for all sciences and helps us to know the proof and its correct methods, for logic is the law of correct thinking. If a person wants his thinking to be correct, then he must observe this law, otherwise he will become distorted and deviate from sound thinking and fall into wrong and incorrect thinking" (Jadawi, 2013). Ibn Hazm said that the authenticity of what is transmitted from the facts cannot be recognized by the mind unless the mind has checked and verified it, just as the authenticity of a message can only be recognized as true or false under the pretext of reason. Ibn Hazm defines the mind as follows: "Indeed, the intellect is a power by which the soul distinguishes all beings in its ranks, or by which it testifies to what has come upon it of its true attributes only for it, and by which it rejects from it what is not in it. The mind consists in perceiving information, collecting it and arranging it according to the values recognized by the mind" (Hazm and Ahmad, 1987).

### ***Comparative analysis***

In order to find parallels and contrasts between different religious traditions, Ibn Hazm compared them side by side. He examined their ideologies, rites, rituals and moral standards and identified both similarities and differences. From the study of his book “Al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwa wa al-Nihal”, it is clear that he studied religions thoroughly from different angles and analyzed them with a deep understanding. He brought various verses from the Christian Bible and carried out a comparative analysis with the Quran to confirm the authenticity of the Quran. He found that many verses in the Bible contradict each other (Hazm, 1985). The first two volumes of Al-Fasl deal with Christianity and Judaism and compare them with Islam. His Al-Fasl is basically an important source for a comparative analysis of religions. Ibn Hazm's system in comparative study is that he organizes and collects all narratives that seem dissimilar, then contrasts and analyzes them, highlighting inconsistencies and contradictions (Ahmad et al., 2011).

### ***Integration of logic and revelation***

Ibn Hazm emphasized the use of human reason alongside religious revelation. He believed that rational inquiry is an essential tool for understanding and evaluating religious beliefs and that reason and revelation should work in harmony with each other. Ibn Hazm used two particular methods. First, he applied logic to prove the truth of revelation (the Qur'an), and second, he compared Qur'anic verses with statements in the distorted scriptures by conducting a logical analysis to identify the distortions in these scriptures. Examples for each way is given below:

*For the first, Ibn Hazm quoted the Qur'anic verse “He wraps the night around the day and wraps the day around the night” (Surah al-Zumar, 5) and explained it with the help of logic. He said that the earth must be round, because if it were not round, the whole earth would have to be in light when the sun rises, and when it sets, the whole world would have to be in darkness. In other words, when the sun orbits the earth, some places on the earth are in light while other places are shrouded in darkness (Hazm, 1985).*

In the second method, Ibn Hazm compared a statement from the distorted version of their scriptures with a corresponding statement from the Qur'an in his arguments with the followers of Christianity and Judaism. In this way, he proved to them that the statement in their book cannot be the true statement and that it is distorted. Himayah went on to say that in this way Ibn Hazm left no doubt in the minds of his addressees. He gave an example of such a comparison. Ibn Hazm quoted a statement from the distorted scripture of the Jews which read, “God-the Almighty-said to Abraham: I am God who took you from the oven of the Kurds to give you this land. Abraham said to him: O Lord, with what can I inherit this land?” Ibn Hazm comments on this text with the words: “God forbid that Ibrahim-the Messenger of God and his friend-should say such words to his Lord, for this is the speech of those who do not trust the message of God-blessed be He. By this he means that a prophet of God cannot distrust God, which would contradict His message, which is impossible. This is an example of how Ibn Hazm uses the Qur'an to refute the other distorted scriptures with logical analysis. (Himayah, 1983).

### ***Polemical discourse***

Ibn Hazm strove for objectivity in his analysis, but also engaged in polemical discourse when necessary. He criticized and questioned certain aspects of other religions, putting forward arguments to support his point of view without losing a certain degree of politeness and respect. Ibn Hazm was very critical of Christianity, for example on the issue of the Trinity. He rejected contemporary Christianity as a monotheistic religion and accused it of being polytheistic (mushrik). Although Christians believe in the absolute unity of God, they also worship the images depicted in their churches, including those of Jesus, Mary, the cross, Gabriel, Michel and others. According to Ibn Hazm, this is a kind of idolatry (ibadah al-athan) (Ahmad et al., 2011).

### ***Historical contextualization***

Ibn Hazm emphasizes the importance of the historical context for the analysis of religious texts, events and ideas. By understanding the socio-cultural and historical factors that influenced the development of different religions, it becomes possible to recognize the nuances and differences within each tradition. In fact, for Ibn Hazm, historical validity is one of the standards for scriptural criticism (Ahmad et al., 2011). For example, Ibn Hazm explains in detail the process of distortion of the Tawrah with reference to the sequence of key events that took place over time in the past. Therefore, one can see how the distortion could be possible (Hazm, 1985).

### ***Interdisciplinary approach***

Ibn Hazm adopts an interdisciplinary approach by integrating insights from fields such as anthropology, sociology, theology, philosophy and history. This multidisciplinary perspective enriches the study by providing a broader framework for understanding religious phenomena. His book “*Al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwa wa al-Nihal*” is the best to understand such phenomena. He studied comparative religion and did critical analysis based on various disciplines. Because he was a multidisciplinary expert (Shuriye and Abdulazeez, 2011).

### ***Empirical research***

Ibn Hazm’s systemic approaches also include empirical research, which can include field research, surveys and quantitative analysis. By collecting data and interacting with people from different religious backgrounds, Ibn Hazm wanted to support his comparative analysis with real evidence. In his chapter titled “*Necessary Evidence for the Creation of the Universe*”, Ibn Hazm provides numerous analyzes based on empirical research on the creation of the universe, drawing on both revelation and logic. (Hazm, 1985).

### ***Ethical approach***

Ibn Hazm adheres to ethical guidelines in the study of comparative religion and respects the beliefs, practices and sensitivities of different religious communities. He encourages a respectful and open dialog that promotes mutual understanding while avoiding any form of religious bias or prejudice. Its approach to other religions is based

on the Islamic values of respect for all people, regardless of their religious affiliation, and human comradeship (Ahmad et al., 2011). Himayah mentioned in his book when discussing the etiquette of controversy that according to Ibn Hazm, the aim of argument is to reach the truth so that each party abandons fanaticism towards its previous standpoint and each party realizes its willingness to search for the truth and accept it when it appears (Himayah, 1983). From this point, it is clear that the goal of any debate should be to accept the truth as it appears. One should not remain in one's biased opinion and turn away from accepting the truth.

## Conclusion

In its conclusion, this study delves into Ibn Hazm's systematic approach to the study of comparative religion, focusing on his influential work, "*Al-Fasl fi al-Milal wa al-Ahwa wa al-Nihal*." Ibn Hazm, a prominent Islamic scholar of the 11th century, made significant contributions to the field of comparative religion by founding the Zahiri school of thought and conducting in-depth studies of various beliefs. The ten systematic approaches identified in this study explain the distinctive features of Ibn Hazm's methodology. How important it was for him to refer to the original text, maintain an analytical and critical attitude, use logical reasoning, conduct comparative analysis, integrate logic and revelation, engage in polemical discourse, when necessary, contextualize history, adopt a cross-disciplinary approach, conduct empirical research, and uphold ethical principles. All of this together highlights the depth and breadth of his scientific contributions. Ibn Hazm's encouragement to read original texts without personal bias reflects his commitment to objectivity and rigor in the comparative study of religion. His careful use of logical reasoning and comparative analysis contributes to a deep understanding of the complexities and inconsistencies in different religious traditions. The integration of logic and revelation reflects a harmonious approach in achieving truth in religious teachings. The polemical discourse used by Ibn Hazm, although critical, still maintains a level of politeness and respect, demonstrating his commitment to constructive dialogue. Historical contextualization adds depth to the analysis, recognizing the impact of socio-cultural and historical factors on the development of religion. The cross-disciplinary approach enriches his studies by including perspectives from anthropology, sociology, theology, philosophy, and history. The empirical research included by Ibn Hazm in his systematic approach, involving field work and quantitative analysis, further strengthens the basis of his comparative analysis. Lastly, its ethical approach, rooted in Islamic values, encourages respectful and open dialogue that transcends religious bias. Overall, this study not only provides valuable insight into Ibn Hazm's systematic approach to the comparative study of religion, but also emphasizes the relevance of his methodology for contemporary scholars in this field. Ibn Hazm's legacy as a pioneering figure in the science of comparative religion is emphasized, providing a comprehensive understanding of his contributions and systematic thinking. Future researchers in the field of comparative religion can take inspiration from Ibn Hazm's multifaceted approach, contributing to the ongoing evolution of this critical study.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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