

Qur'anic Polemics and Reformist Exegesis in Mun'im Sirry's Thought: A Critical Descriptive-Analytical Study

Avina Amalia Mustaghfiroh^{1✉}, ²Henny Sutikno, ³Abdul Basit

¹²³UIN Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto, Indonesia

Email: avinaam86@gmail.com¹, hennykiaa@gamil.com², abdulbasit@uinsaizu.ac.id³

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan mengkaji pemikiran Mun'im Sirry dalam Polemik Kitab Suci dengan menelaah substansi polemik Al-Qur'an, latar belakang intelektual Sirry, serta kritik terhadap konstruksi metodologis pemikirannya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kepustakaan dengan pendekatan deskriptif-analitis dan intertekstual. Sumber utama penelitian adalah Polemik Kitab Suci, sedangkan sumber sekunder meliputi karya-karya Mun'im Sirry dan literatur akademik yang relevan dengan kajian tafsir, Islam reformis, dan relasi antaragama. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa Sirry menempatkan polemik Al-Qur'an terhadap agama lain dalam empat isu utama, yaitu teologi keselamatan eksklusif, tuduhan pemalsuan kitab suci Yahudi dan Kristen, penolakan Al-Qur'an terhadap konsep Trinitas, serta relasi Muslim dengan pemeluk agama lain. Pemikiran Sirry memberikan kontribusi penting dalam membuka pembacaan yang lebih historis, kritis, dan dialogis terhadap ayat-ayat polemis. Namun, kajian ini menemukan beberapa kelemahan metodologis, terutama kurangnya uraian rinci mengenai *asbāb al-nuzūl*, belum kuatnya alasan pemilihan enam tafsir reformis, dan terbatasnya kerangka teori dalam pembacaan tematik. Dengan demikian, pemikiran Sirry penting bagi studi Al-Qur'an kontemporer, tetapi masih memerlukan penguatan metodologis.

Kata Kunci : *asbāb al-nuzūl*; Mun'im Sirry; polemik Al-Qur'an; relasi antaragama; tafsir reformis.

Abstract

This article examines Mun'im Sirry's thought in *Polemik Kitab Suci* by analyzing the substance of Qur'anic polemics, Sirry's intellectual background, and critical responses to the methodological construction of his ideas. This study employs library research using descriptive-analytical and intertextual approaches. The primary source is *Polemik Kitab Suci*, while secondary sources include Sirry's other works and relevant academic literature on Qur'anic interpretation, reformist Islam, and interreligious relations. The findings show that Sirry situates Qur'anic polemics against other religions within four main issues: exclusive salvation theology, the Qur'an's accusation of the falsification of Jewish and Christian scriptures, the Qur'an's rejection of the Trinity, and Muslim relations with followers of other religions. Sirry's thought contributes to developing a more historical, critical, and dialogical reading of polemical Qur'anic verses. However, this study identifies several methodological limitations, particularly the lack of detailed discussion of *asbāb al-nuzūl*, the insufficient explanation for selecting six reformist commentaries, and the limited theoretical framework in thematic interpretation. Therefore, Sirry's thought is significant for contemporary Qur'anic studies, but it still requires stronger methodological grounding.

Keywords: *asbāb al-nuzūl*; interreligious relations; Mun'im Sirry; Qur'anic polemics; reformist interpretation.

Introduction

The reading of Qur'anic verses related to other religions is still an important issue in contemporary Islamic studies, especially when polemic verses are understood literally without considering the historical context, the construction of interpretation, and the dynamics of interreligious relations. This problem becomes increasingly complex because verses that speak of Ahl al-Kitab, salvation, falsification of the holy book, the Trinity, and the boundaries of Muslim relations with non-Muslims are often used to reinforce claims of theological exclusivism, even in some contexts can give birth to prejudice and social distance between religious people (Agbaria, 2022; Saeed & Akbar, 2021). On the other hand, the relationship of the Qur'an to the Judeo-Christian tradition cannot be understood simply as a one-sided rejection relationship, since there are intertextual dimensions, historical revelations, interpretive traditions, and authoritative interests that help shape the way the people understand these verses (Galadari, 2024; Lukman, 2024). Therefore, Mun'im Sirry's thoughts in the *Polemic of the Holy Scriptures* are important to be studied critically, because the book seeks to read the polemics of the Qur'an against other religions through a reformist approach, but at the same time it still needs to be tested in terms of methodological accuracy, especially in the use of *ashbāb al-nuzūl*, the basis for the selection of reformist interpretations, and the consistency of theory in reading the polemical verses of the Qur'an.

Some previous research shows that Mun'im Sirry's thought in the *Polemic of the Holy Scriptures* is widely read in the context of the controversy of inclusive interpretation and revisionist Islam, especially because Sirry interprets the exclusive verses of the Qur'an through the interpretation of Islam as submission to God and encourages historical-critical reading of Islamic sources (Abidin et al., 2023; Rafii, 2015). Another study confirms that Sirry's thinking contributes to the discourse on tolerance and interreligious relations, especially through the reinterpretation of QS. al-Kāfirūn and Sirry's placement as a scholar took a middle position between Islamic traditionalism and historical revisionism in early Islamic studies (Anam & Ghozali, 2022; Hidayat, 2024). In addition, Sirry is also understood as a thinker who seeks to bridge revisionist and traditionalist perspectives in Qur'an scholarship and transform historical Islamic studies into interreligious dialogue discourses in contemporary Indonesia (Badruzaman & Adiyono, 2023; HS & Parninsih, 2024).

Based on the tendency of this study, previous research generally still places Mun'im Sirry's thought in the context of the controversy of inclusive interpretation, revisionist Islam, interreligious tolerance, and his intellectual position between traditionalism and revisionism, but not many have specifically tested Sirry's methodological construction in reading the polemic of the Qur'an against other religions in the *Polemic of the Holy Scriptures*. Important gaps that have not received adequate attention are how Sirry uses the historical context of the verses, the extent to which *ashbāb al-nuzūl* is considered in his analysis, why six reformist interpretations were chosen as the main objects of study, as well as how the theoretical consistency is used in reading the polemical verses thematically. Therefore, this study aims to critically examine Mun'im Sirry's thought in the *Polemic of the Holy Scriptures* by examining the substance of the Qur'an's polemics against other religions, the intellectual background that shaped the construction of his thoughts, as well as methodological criticism of the reformist approach he used in understanding the verses about Ahl al-Kitab, salvation, falsification of the holy book, the Trinity, and the relationship of Muslims with adherents of other religions.

The contribution of this research lies in the effort to expand the critical study of Mun'im Sirry's thought by not only placing it as part of the revisionist Islamic discourse, inclusive interpretation, and interreligious dialogue, but also examining the methodological aspects underlying the construction of his thought in *the Polemic of the Bible*. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of contemporary Qur'an studies, especially in understanding how polemic verses about Ahl al-Kitab, salvation, falsification of the holy book, the Trinity, and interreligious relations can be read through a reformist approach as well as academically criticized. Methodologically, this study offers a critical reading of the use of *asbāb al-nuzūl*, the selection of reformist interpretations, and the consistency of theory in the thematic study of polemic verses. Practically, this research is expected to enrich Islamic discourse that is more dialogical, historical, and reflective, so that the polemic of the Qur'an against other religions is not understood as a basis for exclusivism alone, but as a space for scientific study to build more constructive interreligious relations.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative library research design with a textual study model. This design was selected because the main object of the study is Mun'im Sirry's ideas, argumentative construction, and interpretation of Qur'anic polemical verses in *Polemik Kitab Suci: Interpretasi Reformis atas Kritik Al-Qur'an terhadap Agama Lain*. A qualitative approach is relevant because this study does not aim to measure data statistically, but to understand the meaning, structure of argumentation, and intellectual position of Sirry within the discourse of reformist Qur'anic interpretation, revisionist Islam, and interreligious relations (John W. Creswell & Cheryl N. Poth, 2023; Lim, 2024).

The data sources of this study consist of primary and secondary sources. The primary source is Mun'im Sirry's *Polemik Kitab Suci*, as this book serves as the main object of analysis. The secondary sources include Sirry's other works, journal articles, Qur'anic commentaries, and academic literature related to reformist exegesis, Qur'anic polemics, revisionist Islam, theology of religions, and Muslim relations with followers of other religions. The sources were selected purposively based on their direct relevance to the three main focuses of the study: the substance of Qur'anic polemics in *Polemik Kitab Suci*, Mun'im Sirry's intellectual background, and critical responses to the construction of his thought.

The data were collected through documentation techniques. The data collection process involved critically reading the primary text, taking notes on significant passages, identifying key concepts, and classifying the data according to the research focus. Documentation was used because this study relies on written documents as the main basis of analysis, including books, scholarly articles, and other relevant academic works (Morgan, 2022). The collected data were then categorized according to the four major themes discussed by Sirry: exclusive salvation theology in Islam, the Qur'an's accusation of the falsification of Jewish and Christian scriptures, the Qur'an's rejection of the concept of the Trinity, and Muslim relations with followers of other religions.

The data were analyzed using a descriptive-analytical method through thematic and intertextual readings. Descriptive analysis was used to present Mun'im Sirry's main ideas regarding Qur'anic polemics against other religions, while critical analysis was used to examine the strengths, contributions, and limitations of his intellectual construction. The analytical process involved repeated reading of the primary source, identification of major themes, coding of important issues, classification of data based on the research focus, interpretation of argumentative patterns, and

formulation of critical synthesis. This procedure is in line with thematic analysis, which emphasizes familiarization with data, coding, theme construction, theme review, and the development of reflective interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Data trustworthiness was maintained through source triangulation and interpretive consistency. Triangulation was carried out by comparing Mun'im Sirry's ideas in *Polemik Kitab Suci* with his other works and relevant academic literature. In addition, intertextual reading was applied to examine the relationship between Sirry's thought, the tradition of reformist Qur'anic interpretation, and the discourse of revisionist Islam. Interpretive validity was strengthened through repeated readings of the primary text, alignment between data and research focus, and the appropriate use of secondary sources to support the analysis. Through these procedures, this study seeks to produce a systematic, critical, and academically accountable reading of Mun'im Sirry's thought on Qur'anic polemics and interreligious relations.

Results and Discussion

The Polemic of the Qur'an in the Framework of Reformist Tafsir Mun'im Sirry

In the construction of Mun'im Sirry's thought, the polemic of the Qur'an against other religions is understood as an important hermeneutical issue in contemporary interpretation. Polemic verses are not placed simply as a text of criticism of other religious communities, especially Jews and Christians, but as part of the Qur'anic discourse that needs to be read with regard to the historical context, the dynamics of interpretation, and the reality of interreligious relations (Abidin et al., 2023; Sirry, 2026). Literal and apologetic readings of such verses risk reinforcing theological exclusivism, social prejudice, and religious distance, especially when polemical texts are detached from their historical context and ethical orientation (Anam & Ghazali, 2022; Sirry et al., 2024). Therefore, Sirry's reformist approach seeks to shift the orientation of reading from a confrontational pattern to a more critical, historical, and dialogical reading (Badruzaman et al., 2024; Hidayat, 2024; Sirry, 2021b).

The substance of the Qur'anic polemic in the *Polemik of the Holy Scriptures* can be mapped into four main issues. The first issue relates to the exclusive theology of salvation in Islam, which is the debate about whether salvation belongs only to Muslims formally or is open to adherents of other religions who believe in God and do good deeds (Abidin et al., 2023; Anam & Ghazali, 2022; Sirry, 2013). The second issue relates to the Qur'an's accusation of falsification of Jewish and Christian scriptures, especially through the concepts of *tahrif*, *kitmān*, *ikhfā'*, and *layy*, which in Sirry's reading are understood not only as theological claims, but also as a polemical discourse that develops in the context of Islam's relationship with the earlier biblical community (Sirry, 2014, 2026). The third issue concerns the Qur'an's rejection of the concept of the Trinity as one of the points of theological criticism of Christianity, especially in relation to the way the Qur'an represents Christian doctrine and how reformist interpretations read the criticism in a historical-contextual manner (Sirry, 2013, 2026). The fourth issue relates to the relationship between Muslims and adherents of other religions, including social boundaries, social cooperation, and the position of *Ahl al-Kitāb* in Muslim society. In this case, Sirry does not simply read polemic verses as a device that limits religious identity, but as a hermeneutical space to negotiate interreligious relations in a more critical, historical, and dialogical way (Badruzaman et al., 2024; Hidayat, 2024).

On the issue of salvation theology, Sirry shows an inclusive tendency by reading the term "Islam" not only as a formal religious identity brought by the Prophet Muhammad, but also as an attitude of submission to God. This reading was seen when Sirry studied QS. Ali 'Imrān: 19, QS. Ali

'Imrān: 85, and QS. al-Mā'idah: 3, which has often been used to reinforce claims of safety exclusivism (Sirry, 2013; Sirry, 2014). In the reformist reading, the meaning of *al-dīn* and *al-Islām* is not limited to institutional identity, but is associated with resignation, submission, and religious orientation directed to God (Abidin et al., 2023; Saifullah, 2023). Thus, Sirry opens up the possibility of a more plural and inclusive theology of salvation, although it still departs from the framework of the Islamic tradition.

On the issue of the falsification of Jewish and Christian scriptures, Sirry points out that *the accusation of taḥrīf* does not always have to be understood as a total change to the text of scripture. In some of the reformist interpretations he studied, notably al-Qāsimī's view, *taḥrīf* is closer to a distortion of meaning, interpretation, or use of the text, rather than always a complete textual change (Sirry, 2013, 2014). This reading is in line with the recent study of the involvement of Muslim interpretation with Biblical texts, which shows that the relationship between the Qur'an and the previous holy book moves not only in the form of textual rejection, but also through the debate over interpretation, the authority of meaning, and the use of texts in the space of religious polemics (Jacobs, 2025; Ross, 2024). In this way, the polemic of the Qur'an is not positioned as the basis of interreligious hostility, but as a space for theological criticism that needs to be read historically and contextually.

On the issue of the Trinity and interreligious relations, Sirry uses a reformist approach to show that the Qur'an's criticism of Christian doctrine cannot be separated from the historical context of revelation and the forms of belief that developed in the Arab environment at the time. The criticism of the concepts of the divinity of Jesus, the son of God, and the Trinity in the Qur'an is not read as a stand-alone rejection, but as a theological response to the construction of certain Christian beliefs understood in the historical context of early Islam (Demichelis, 2021; Sirry, 2013, 2014). Similarly, verses relating to the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims, such as verses on *Ahl al-Kitāb*, *jizyah*, and the prohibition of making other communities allies, cannot be generalized as universal injunctions, since some of them relate to certain socio-political situations involving conflicts, the protection of communities, and the limits of political loyalty (Ali, 2023; Bhuiyan & Zoethout, 2023; Dika Purnama Aulia Rohma, 2024). Thus, the substance of Sirry's thought shows that there is an attempt to shift the reading of polemical verses from a confrontational orientation to a dialogical orientation.

Mun'im Sirry's Intellectual Background and Reformist Reading Orientation

The construction of Mun'im Sirry's thought can be understood through his position that seeks to bring together the Islamic scientific tradition with a historical-critical approach in religious studies. In early Islamic studies and Qur'anic studies, Sirry does not place traditionalist and revisionist approaches as two poles to be chosen absolutely, but as a field of methodological dialogue that needs to be read critically. Galadari assessed that Sirry carefully mapped out various theories about the origins of Islam, showing the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, and encouraging constructive dialogue rather than methodological polemics (Galadari, 2022). This pattern is also evident in Sirry's article on the early interpretation of the concept *of ulū'l-amr*, which traces the development of meaning in Sunni and Shia interpretive literature during the first six centuries of Islam, thus showing its attachment to the tradition of interpretation as well as the use of historical reading on the development of the meaning of the text (Sirry, 2021a). This methodological background explains why Sirry did not completely abandon the tradition of Islamic

interpretation, but also did not accept the legacy of classical interpretation without methodological criticism.

Sirry's reformist orientation is evident from his choice to use six modern interpretations as the basis for analysis, namely *Maḥāsīn al-Ta'wīl* by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī, *Tafsīr al-Manār* by Rashīd Riḍā, *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān* by Abul Kalam Azad, *al-Tafsīr al-Kāshif* by Muḥammad Jawād Mughniyah, *al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, and *Hamka's Tafsīr al-Azhar*. This choice shows Sirry's tendency to read the polemical verses of the Qur'an through interpretations that remain rooted in the classical tradition, but are open to rationality, historical context, and modern socio-religious problems (Badruzaman et al., 2024). This reformist pattern can be seen in *Maḥāsīn al-Ta'wīl* and *Tafsīr al-Manār*, both of which emphasize the renewal of Islamic understanding through rational, moral, and contextual approaches (Habibi, 2025; Rezwandi et al., 2025). In the context of South Asia and Indonesia, *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān* and *Tafsīr al-Azhar* show concern for the social plurality, nationality, and needs of modern Muslims (Bariqi, 2025; Muhammed Rashid Jalaly, 2025). Meanwhile, *al-Mizān* and *al-Kāshif* show the tendency of modern interpretation through rational argumentation, systematics of interpretation, and a more communicative presentation of the Qur'anic message for contemporary readers (Ayu Sulastri et al., 2025; Hakim, 2024).

The choice of reformist interpretation shows that Sirry wants to read polemical verses through the voices of modern Muslim interpretations that have sensitivity to social and historical contexts. In *Scriptural Polemics*, Sirry explicitly places the Qur'anic polemic verses against Jews and Christians within the framework of 20th-century interpretation, with a focus on how the modern context shapes Muslim reformers' understanding of these verses (Sirry, 2014; Sirry, 2026). Within this framework, tafsir is understood not only as an explanation of the literal meaning of the verse, but also as an intellectual construction born from the limitations of human understanding, historical dynamics, and certain socio-religious needs (Alak, 2023; Sirry, 2021a). Therefore, Sirry's reading of the Qur'anic polemic moves in two directions. On the one hand, Sirry still makes the Qur'an and the tradition of tafsir as the basis of science; on the other hand, he uses historical criticism to look at how polemic verses are understood, interpreted, and used in the discourse of Islam's relationship with other religions (Galadari, 2022; Hidayat, 2024). Thus, Sirry's approach shows an effort to maintain a connection with the tradition of interpretation while opening up a space for critical reading of the heritage of classical interpretation.

Sirry's intellectual position can be understood as an attempt to take a middle ground between traditionalism and revisionism. He does not fully follow traditionalist tendencies that accept the narrative of interpretation normatively, nor does he take a radical revisionist position that places excessive suspicion on Islamic sources. In Galadari's reading, Sirry's work on the origins of Islam shows an attempt to weigh the strengths and weaknesses of traditionalist and revisionist approaches, while encouraging a more constructive methodological dialogue in early Islamic studies (Galadari, 2022). This pattern is also evident in Sirry's article on the early interpretation of the concept of *ulū'l-amr*, which shows how the meaning of the Qur'anic text developed, negotiated, and debated in the Sunni and Shia traditions of interpretation during the first six centuries of Islam (Sirry, 2021). Thus, Sirry's thought is more appropriately placed as a reformist-critical reading that seeks to revive the Islamic tradition through historical, dialogical, and contextual approaches. This position is in line with the trend of contemporary Qur'an studies that emphasize the importance of reading religious texts not only as normative documents, but also as texts that interact with history, society, interpretive traditions, and other religious heritages (Dye, 2021; Mostfa, 2024; Saeed & Akbar, 2021).

Methodological Critique of the Construction of Mun'im Sirry's Thought

Although Mun'im Sirry's thought makes an important contribution to contemporary Qur'anic studies, its methodological construction still requires critical examination. The first critique concerns the use of *asbāb al-nuzūl* in interpreting polemical verses. Sirry does pay attention to historical context in a general sense, but his discussion does not always provide a detailed account of the *asbāb al-nuzūl* for each verse under examination. In Qur'anic exegesis, *asbāb al-nuzūl* plays an important role in clarifying the social context, historical situation, and intended direction of a verse, especially when the verse contains normative, polemical, or relational dimensions. Contemporary Qur'anic hermeneutics emphasizes that the interpretation of Qur'anic verses should not stop at textual literalism, but should also consider the relationship between text, revelatory context, social needs, and the distinction between particular messages and universal principles (Mostfa, 2024; Saeed & Akbar, 2021). Without adequate attention to *asbāb al-nuzūl*, the interpretation of polemical verses risks becoming overly general and less capable of distinguishing between the universal message of a verse and the particular context in which it was revealed.

The second critique concerns the basis for selecting six reformist Qur'anic commentaries as the main objects of analysis. Sirry does identify six modern commentaries that he considers representative of reformist tendencies, yet the methodological rationale behind this selection still needs to be explained more explicitly. Several important questions arise: why were only these six commentaries selected, why are certain commentaries considered more representative than other reformist works, and whether the status of a commentary as a *magnum opus* is sufficient to make it a primary object of study in examining Qur'anic polemics. In thematic Qur'anic studies, the selection of sources, the boundaries of the corpus, the criteria of representation, and the rationale for choosing particular verses or commentaries need to be clearly formulated so that the analysis is not merely selective, but also methodologically accountable (Azizy et al., 2022; Dye, 2021). This clarification is important because the selection of exegetical sources significantly shapes the direction of analysis, the conclusions drawn, and the generalizations made about reformist exegesis in interpreting polemical verses.

The third critique concerns theoretical consistency in the thematic reading of Qur'anic verses. Sirry employs reformist and historical-critical approaches, but the theoretical construction that connects verses, exegesis, historical context, and interreligious relations is not always presented systematically. In thematic or *mawḍū'ī* studies, the selection of verses within a single theme should be accompanied by a clear analytical framework so that the relationship between verses is not merely descriptive, but also argumentative. Recent studies in Qur'anic scholarship show that exegesis cannot be separated from the development of exegetical practices, the socio-political dynamics of interpreters, and the shifting meanings of texts within the Islamic scholarly tradition (Mostfa, 2024; Yahyaoui, 2024). Therefore, Sirry's reformist approach needs to be strengthened through a more explicit theoretical apparatus, such as Qur'anic hermeneutics, intertextuality, or theories of interreligious relations, so that his reading of Qur'anic polemics becomes more methodologically robust.

In addition, Sirry's reading of Qur'anic polemics is strong in offering a dialogical orientation, but it still needs to be critically examined so that it does not appear to overemphasize inclusivist dimensions while giving insufficient attention to the internal complexity of the exegetical tradition. Polemical verses are not only related to the relationship between Islam and other religions, but also to the construction of exegetical authority, the boundaries of religious identity, and the socio-political dynamics of Muslim communities during both the revelatory period and the modern era.

Interreligious hermeneutics emphasizes that the Qur'an needs to be read as a text that interacts with other religious traditions, but such a reading still requires methodological caution so that the historical, polemical, and exegetical complexities surrounding the text are not overlooked (El Omari, 2024; Alak, 2023). Therefore, the study of Sirry's thought should position his contribution proportionally: it is significant because it opens a more historical and dialogical space for reading the Qur'an, but it also needs to be strengthened through greater methodological precision in examining text, context, and exegetical tradition.

Thus, Mun'im Sirry's thought in *Polemik Kitab Suci* makes a significant contribution to developing a more open reading of the Qur'an in relation to interreligious engagement. Sirry successfully demonstrates that polemical verses do not necessarily have to serve as the basis for exclusivism and hostility, but may instead be read as part of the historical dynamics of revelation and theological encounters among Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. However, this contribution needs to be accompanied by academic critique, especially regarding the need to clarify *ashāb al-nuzūl*, the criteria for selecting reformist commentaries, and theoretical consistency in thematic interpretation. The main strength of Sirry's thought lies in his courage to open a space for dialogue in Qur'anic studies, while its weakness lies in methodological aspects that still require further strengthening so that his intellectual construction becomes more systematic, measurable, and academically accountable.

The novelty of this study lies in its critical positioning of Mun'im Sirry's *Polemik Kitab Suci* not merely as a reformist reading of Qur'anic polemics, but as an intellectual construction that requires methodological examination. Previous studies have generally emphasized Sirry's inclusive tendency, revisionist orientation, and contribution to interreligious dialogue. This study moves beyond those tendencies by examining the methodological foundations of Sirry's reading, particularly his use of historical context, the selection of six reformist Qur'anic commentaries, and the theoretical consistency of his thematic interpretation. Therefore, this study contributes a more critical perspective by showing that Sirry's reformist approach is important for opening dialogical readings of polemical verses, but it still requires stronger methodological justification to be academically robust.

The findings of this study have theoretical, methodological, and practical implications. Theoretically, this study enriches contemporary Qur'anic studies by demonstrating that polemical verses concerning Ahl al-Kitāb, salvation, *tahrīf*, the Trinity, and Muslim–non-Muslim relations can be read through a reformist framework without abandoning critical engagement with the Islamic exegetical tradition. Methodologically, this study highlights the importance of clarifying *ashāb al-nuzūl*, source-selection criteria, and theoretical frameworks in thematic Qur'anic interpretation, especially when dealing with sensitive interreligious issues. Practically, this study offers a constructive contribution to interreligious discourse by showing that Qur'anic polemics should not be reduced to hostility or theological exclusion, but can become a space for historical reflection, critical interpretation, and more responsible religious engagement.

This study has several limitations. First, it focuses primarily on Mun'im Sirry's *Polemik Kitab Suci* as the main object of analysis, so it does not provide a comprehensive comparison with all of Sirry's works on revisionist Islam, interreligious relations, and early Islamic studies. Second, the study is based on library research and textual analysis, which means that it does not examine the reception of Sirry's thought among Muslim scholars, religious communities, or broader Indonesian Muslim audiences. Third, although this study discusses the six reformist commentaries used by Sirry, it does not conduct a full comparative exegetical analysis of each commentary. Future research may therefore expand this study by comparing Sirry's reading with other reformist, traditionalist, or contemporary tafsir works, as well as by examining how his ideas are received, contested, and developed in academic and public religious discourse.

Conclusion

Mun'im Sirry's *Polemik Kitab Suci* presents Qur'anic polemics against other religions through a reformist reading that moves beyond literal, apologetic, and confrontational interpretations. The main issues discussed in Sirry's thought include exclusive salvation theology, the Qur'an's accusation of the falsification of Jewish and Christian scriptures, the rejection of the Trinity, and Muslim relations with followers of other religions. These findings indicate that Sirry does not treat Qur'anic polemics merely as theological criticism, but as a hermeneutical space for understanding the historical encounter between Islam, Judaism, and Christianity.

Sirry's intellectual background shapes his reformist orientation by bringing together Islamic exegetical tradition, modern Islamic thought, and historical-critical approaches. However, his construction of thought still requires methodological strengthening, particularly in the detailed use of *asbāb al-nuzūl*, the criteria for selecting six reformist commentaries, and the explicit theoretical framework for thematic interpretation. The implication is that the interpretation of polemical Qur'anic verses should not only promote inclusive and dialogical readings, but also ensure exegetical accuracy, contextual clarity, and theoretical consistency so that Qur'anic studies can contribute more responsibly to contemporary interreligious discourse.

References

- Abidin, Z., Ashadi, A., & Faizin. (2023). Kontroversi Buku Polemik Kitab Suci Karya Mun'im Sirry. *ISME: Journal of Islamic Studies and Multidisciplinary Research*, 1(1 SE-Articles), 14–31. <https://doi.org/10.61683/isme.vol11.2023.14-31>
- Agbaria, A. (2022). Education for Religious Pluralism in Islam: One Book or Series of Books, a Singular Message or Myriad Messages? In *Religions* (Vol. 13, Issue 4, p. 283). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040283>
- Alak, A. I. (2023). The Islamic Humanist Hermeneutics: Definition, Characteristics, and Relevance. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 34(4), 313–336. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2023.2282842>
- Ali, M. (2023). *Chapter 3 Religious Pluralism and Freedom in Islam* (pp. 36–56). Brill | Nijhoff. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004504967_004
- Anam, H. F., & Ghozali, M. (2022). The Concept of Religious Tolerance in Reconstruction and Reinterpretation of Al-Kafirun by Mun'im Sirry (Critical Discourse Analysis of Teun A. Van Dijk). *Jurnal Indo-Islamika*, 12(1), 69–87.
- Ayu Sulastrri, Noor Muhammad Rizki Kamil, & Widyanto Naufal Mahdy. (2025). Syekh Muhammad Jawad Maghnyyah's Interpretation Methodology in Tafsir Al-Kasyif on Qs Al-Mudatsir. *Al-Afkar, Journal For Islamic Studies*, 8(4 SE-Articles), 1739–1749. <https://doi.org/10.31943/afkarjournal.v8i4.1840>
- Azizy, J., Syarifuddin, M. A., & Ubaidah, H. H. (2022). Thematic Presentations in Indonesian Qur'anic Commentaries. In *Religions* (Vol. 13, Issue 2, p. 140). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13020140>
- Badruzaman, A., & Adiyono, A. (2023). Reinterpreting Identity: The Influence of Bureaucracy, Situation Definition, Discrimination, and Elites in Islamic Education. *Journal of Research in Instructional*, 3(2), 157–175. <https://doi.org/10.30862/jri.v3i2.264>
- Badruzaman, A., Ahmadi, R., & Siddik, S. (2024). Mun'im Sirry's Middle Path: Bridging Revisionist and Traditionalist Perspectives in Qur'anic Scholarship. *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis*, 25(2), 370–393. <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v25i2.5436>
- Bariqi, S. (2025). Narasi Reformisme dalam Tafsir Al-Azhar. *SUHUF*, 18(1 SE-Articles). <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v18i1.1176>
- Bhuiyan, M. J. H., & Zoethout, C. M. (2023). *Chapter 1 Freedom of Religion and Religious Pluralism: An Introduction* (pp. 3–15). Brill | Nijhoff. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004504967_002

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3), 328–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238>
- Demichelis, M. (2021). Quranic Christology in Late Antiquity. 'Isa ibn Maryam and His Divine Power (Energeia) in the Islamic Revelation. In *Religions* (Vol. 12, Issue 11, p. 979). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12110979>
- Dika Purnama Aulia Rohma, A. A. K. (2024). Building community harmony in religious pluralism: Abdullah Saeed's contextual interpretation of Jizyah. In M. P. Dr. Nikmarijal (Ed.), *Restrengthening Islamic values for humanity and peace* (pp. 199–205). Redwhite Press. <https://doi.org/10.32698/aicoiis24614>
- Dye, G. (2021). Concepts and Methods in the Study of the Qur'ān. In *Religions* (Vol. 12, Issue 8, p. 599). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12080599>
- Galadari, A. (2022). Controversies over Islamic Origins: An Introduction to Traditionalism and Revisionism. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 33(2), 195–197. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2022.2048520>
- Galadari, A. (2024). Qur'anic Understandings of the Divine Name Yhwh. *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 35(2), 137–168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2024.2321044>
- Habibi, M. D. (2025). Epistemology of Jamaluddin Al-Qasimi Tafsir: A Study of the Tafsir Mahasin al-Ta'wil. *Al-Dzikra: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Al-Hadits*, 19(2), 265–286. <https://doi.org/10.24042/al-dzikra.v19i2.26359>
- Hakim, F. (2024). Rasionalitas dalam Penafsiran: Analisis Kritis terhadap Kitab Tafsir Al-Mizān karya Allāmah Al-Ṭabātabā'ī. *Nun: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Tafsir Di Nusantara*, 10(1 SE-Articles), 37–52. <https://doi.org/10.32495/nun.v10i1.826>
- Hidayat, T. (2024). Mun'im Sirry's Position in Early Islamic Studies: Between Traditionalists and Revisionists. *Majalah Ilmu Pengetahuan Dan Pemikiran Keagamaan Tajdid*, 27(1), 47–66. <https://ejournal.uinib.ac.id/jurnal/index.php/tajdid/article/view/8453>
- HS, M. A., & Parnasih, I. (2024). Academic Study's Transformation of Indonesian Muslim on His Religion: The Case of Mun'im Sirry. *Islamic History And Literature Ученые: Jomard Publishing*, 2(3), 169–180. <https://doi.org/10.62476/ihl23169>
- Jacobs, B. (2025). An Early Syriac Response to the Charge of Tahriḥ in George of B'eltan's Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew. *Eastern Christians' Engagement with Islam and the Qur'ān: Texts, Contexts and Knowledge Regimes, Edited by Octavian-Adrian Negoită*. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111140766-002>
- John W. Creswell & Cheryl N. Poth. (2023). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design Choosing Among Five Approaches*. SAGE Publications, Inc. <https://collegepublishing.sagepub.com/products/qualitative-inquiry-and-research-design-5-266033>
- Lim, Weng Marc. (2024). What Is Qualitative Research? An Overview and Guidelines. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 33(2), 199–229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14413582241264619>
- Lukman, F. (2024). Conflicting Interests in the Creation of a State-Authorised Translation: Comparing the Saudi and Indonesian Editions of Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahnya. *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 26(1), 38–62. <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2024.0568>
- Morgan, H. (2022). Conducting a qualitative document analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, 27(1), 64–77. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5044>
- Mostfa, A. (2024). Redefining Qur'ānic Hermeneutics: Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābrī and Nasr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd's Humanistic Interpretations. In *Religions* (Vol. 15, Issue 3, p. 278). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15030278>
- Muhammed Rashid Jalaly. (2025). A Review of Abul Kalam Azad's Commentary on the Qur'an, "Tarjumān Al-Qur'ān." *Al-Bunyan: Interdisciplinary Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies*, 2(2 SE-Articles), 145–152. <https://doi.org/10.61166/bunyan.v2i2.29>
- Rafii, M. (2015). Memahami Konsep Islam Revisionis Mun'im Sirry. *Nizham Journal of Islamic Studies*, 10(1), 1–12. <https://e-journal.metrouniv.ac.id/nizham/article/view/6851>

- Rezwandi, R., Fikri, A., & Sofa, M. M. (2025). STUDI ANALITIS ATAS TAFSIR AL-MANAR: KONTRIBUSI INTELEKTUAL MUHAMMAD ABDUH DAN M. RASYID RIDHA DALAM TRADISI TAFSIR MODERN. *JUTEQ: JURNAL TEOLOGI & TAFSIR*, 2(10), 1495-1509. <http://languar.net/index.php/JUTEQ/article/view/446>
- Ross, S. (2024). *Qur'an Commentary and the Biblical Turn: A History of Muslim Exegetical Engagement with the Biblical Text*. De Gruyter. <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=PUXyEAAAQBAJ>
- Saeed, A., & Akbar, A. (2021). Contextualist Approaches and the Interpretation of the Qur'ān. In *Religions* (Vol. 12, Issue 7, p. 527). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12070527>
- Saifullah, S. (2023). Interpretation of the Meaning of the Term Islam in Al-Manār Tafsir and Its Relationship to Inter-Religious and Inter Cultural Relations. *Dialogia: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Sosial*, 21(1), 70-92. <https://repository.iainponorogo.ac.id/1693/>
- Sirry, M. (2013). *Polemik kitab suci: tafsir reformis atas kritik Al-Qur'an terhadap agama lain*. Kompas Gramedia. <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=XoDs0AEACAAJ>
- Sirry, M. (2014). *Scriptural Polemics: The Qur'an and Other Religions*. Oxford University Press. <https://books.google.co.id/books?id=Us4sAwAAQBAJ>
- Sirry, M. (2021a). *Controversies over Islamic Origins: An Introduction to Traditionalism and Revisionism*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. https://books.google.co.id/books?id=_4w2EAAAQBAJ
- Sirry, M. (2021b). Who Are Those in Authority? Early Muslim Exegesis of the Qur'anic Ulū'l-Amr. In *Religions* (Vol. 12, Issue 7, p. 483). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12070483>
- Sirry, M. (2026). *Chapter 13 Understanding the Qur'ān's Criticisms of Other Religions* (pp. 350-365). Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004750692_014
- Sirry, M., Suyanto, B., Sugihartati, R., Tri Kartono, D., & Yani, M. T. (2024). Teachers' perspectives on tolerance education in Indonesian high schools. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 46(4), 505-519. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2024.2345213>
- Yahyaoui, Y. (2024). Qur'ānic Exegesis and the Reshaping of Early Islamic History: A Case Study of Sura Q 107. In *Religions* (Vol. 15, Issue 11, p. 1301). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15111301>