

Revisiting Mun'im Sirry's Reading of Āli 'Imrān [3]:19 through Maqashidi Tafsir

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Mun'im Sirry; Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19; maqāṣidī interpretation;	Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19, particularly the statement <i>inna al-dīna 'inda Allāhi al-Islām</i>, has become an important subject in debates concerning religious truth, salvation, and the relationship between Islam and other religious traditions. Mun'im Sirry interprets <i>al-Islām</i> primarily in its universal sense of submission and surrender to God, thereby challenging rigid exclusivist interpretations of salvation. However, this universalization raises a methodological question concerning whether the meaning of <i>al-Islām</i> can be detached from its normative reference to the revealed religion brought by Prophet Muhammad. This study aims to reconstruct Sirry's interpretation of Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19 and critically reassess it through a <i>tafsir maqāṣidī</i> approach. Employing qualitative library research with a critical-analytical method, the study examines Sirry's <i>Polemik Kitab Suci</i>, Hamka's <i>Tafsir al-Azhar</i>, and relevant Qur'anic and exegetical sources, particularly Ibn 'Āshūr's <i>al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr</i>, while applying Abdul Mustaqim's methodological framework of <i>tafsir maqāṣidī</i>. The analysis focuses on Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:18–20 to examine the linguistic, theological, contextual, and maqāṣidī dimensions of <i>al-Islām</i>. The study finds that Sirry's interpretation contributes to challenging rigid exclusivist readings by emphasizing submission to God as the fundamental meaning of Islam. Nevertheless, Ibn 'Āshūr's maqāṣidī interpretation demonstrates that this universal meaning remains connected to Islam as the complete and normative divine guidance revealed through Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, the maqāṣidī reassessment does not eliminate the theological normativity of Islam but distinguishes it from social hostility toward other religious communities. The study concludes that Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19 can be understood through an integrated framework of universal submission, tawḥīd, divine guidance, and normative religious completeness.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The statement *inna al-dīna 'inda Allāhi al-Islām* ("Indeed, the religion in the sight of God is Islam") in Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19 occupies an important position in Qur'anic discussions of religious truth and salvation. Read together with Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:85, the verse has frequently been understood as affirming the normative superiority of Islam over other religious traditions and, consequently, as supporting an exclusivist theology of salvation. At the same time, the semantic range of the term *al-Islām* has generated a longstanding interpretive debate. Some contemporary readings emphasize *islām* in its generic sense of submission and surrender to God, while others understand it as referring specifically to the religious tradition brought by the Prophet Muhammad. The tension between these two readings becomes particularly significant when Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19 is connected to the Qur'an's broader discourse on religious diversity, salvation, and the status of earlier religious communities. Recent studies of the verse likewise demonstrate that its interpretation has become a point of intersection between exclusivist, inclusivist, and pluralist approaches to Qur'anic interpretation.¹

Within this debate, Mun'im Sirry offers a significant critique of exclusivist salvation theology. In *Scriptural Polemics: The Qur'an and Other Religions*, Sirry examines Qur'anic passages concerning Jews and Christians through the lens of twentieth-century Muslim reformist exegesis, with particular attention to questions of supersessionism and exclusive salvation. His discussion places Muhammad 'Abduh, Rashīd Riḍā, and Hamka within a broader reformist trajectory that attempted to reconsider inherited interpretations of Qur'anic polemical passages.² Sirry's reading of *al-dīn* and *al-Islām* is particularly important because it allows *Islam* to be understood beyond a narrowly communal or historical designation. The materials examined by Sirry indicate that Hamka, while discussing Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19, emphasizes the fundamental meaning of Islam as submission and surrender to God. Sirry also identifies a significant intellectual relationship between Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar* and Rashīd Riḍā's *Tafsir al-Manār*, placing Hamka within the reformist exegetical tradition.³ This reformist genealogy is crucial because it demonstrates that the debate over Islam and salvation is not simply a contemporary phenomenon but is rooted in modern Muslim attempts to negotiate Qur'anic theology with religious plurality.

Nevertheless, Sirry's reinterpretation raises a methodological and theological question that deserves further examination. If *al-Islām* in Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19 is primarily understood as a universal principle of submission to God, does this interpretation adequately account for the Qur'an's normative claim concerning the specific religious message brought by Muhammad? In other words, does the universalization of *al-Islām* automatically dissolve the normative dimension of Islam as a revealed religion mediated through the Prophet Muhammad? The problem is not merely semantic. It concerns the relationship between the

¹ Agus Rahman Setiawan, "Memahami Kata Islam dalam QS. Ali Imran: 19 Perspektif Semiotika Roland Barthes," *Tafsir Al-Qur'an*, December 19, 2021.

² Mun'im A. Sirry, *Scriptural Polemics: The Qur'an and Other Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 65–98.

³ Mun'im A. Sirry, "The Muslim Luther and Reformation," University of Chicago Divinity School, 2012.

universal ethical-theological meaning of submission and the particular historical form through which the Qur'an articulates religious guidance. Recent scholarship on Qur'anic polemical verses has shown that reformist reinterpretations can move apparently exclusive statements toward an inclusive ethical framework emphasizing coexistence, religious freedom, and human solidarity.⁴ Yet such reinterpretation requires careful consideration of the relationship between textual meaning, Qur'anic context, and the broader objectives of revelation. Without such consideration, an inclusive reading may risk reducing a normatively significant Qur'anic concept to a general ethical principle detached from its theological and historical context.

A maqāshidī approach provides a productive framework for examining this problem because it does not reduce Qur'anic interpretation either to isolated linguistic meanings or to unrestricted contextual reinterpretation. Instead, it seeks to identify the purposes, values, and objectives underlying Qur'anic discourse while maintaining sensitivity to the textual and contextual dimensions of revelation. Ibn 'Āshūr is particularly important in this regard. His theory of *maqāṣid al-Qur'ān* insists that interpretation should not be confined to explaining the semantic meaning of individual expressions; the exegete must also consider the objectives for which the Qur'an was revealed. His approach connects Qur'anic interpretation with broader objectives such as the reform of belief, moral formation, social reform, and the welfare of human beings.⁵ This methodological orientation is further developed in contemporary maqāshidī discourse. Abdul Mustaqim argues for a maqāshidī interpretation that can engage the Qur'an with contemporary social realities while remaining rooted in the objectives of revelation. Meanwhile, Jasser Auda's systems approach emphasizes holism, openness, multidimensionality, interrelatedness, and purposefulness, allowing textual interpretation to be connected to wider ethical and social consequences.⁶ Thus, a maqāshidī reading of Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19 should ask not only what *al-Islām* means linguistically, but also what theological, ethical, and human purposes are served by the verse and how those purposes relate to the Qur'an's wider discourse on religious truth and human relations.

The significance of this approach becomes clearer when the existing literature is considered. Previous scholarship has discussed Mun'im Sirry primarily in relation to Qur'anic polemics, religious pluralism, modern Muslim reformism, and the reinterpretation of verses concerning non-Muslims. Sirry himself has explored the relationship between Qur'anic polemical passages and modern reformist exegesis, while more recent scholarship has examined how his work contributes to contextual and pluralist approaches to interreligious relations.⁷ Other studies have specifically examined Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19 through

⁴ Muhamad Yoga Firdaus, "Reinterpretasi Ayat-Ayat Polemis Al-Qur'an dalam Jembatan Dialog Antaragama," *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Ushuluddin* 5, no. 3 (2025).

⁵ Tazul Islam, "Ibn Ashur's Views on Maqasid al-Qur'an: An Analysis," *Journal of Ma'alim al-Quran wa al-Sunnah* 14, no. 2 (2018): 147–161.

⁶ Asep Sulhadi, "Recontextualizing Maqasid al-Shariah in Contemporary Qur'anic Exegesis: A Comparative Study of Jasser Auda and Classical Scholars," *Samawat: Journal of Hadith and Qur'anic Studies* 8, no. 2 (2024): 29–39.

⁷ Mun'im A. Sirry, "Compete with One Another in Good Works': Exegesis of Qur'an Verse 5.48 and Contemporary Muslim Discourses on Religious Pluralism," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 20, no. 4 (2009): 423–438.

approaches such as *ma'na-cum-maghẓā*, semiotics, or broader debates on Islamic inclusivism and exclusivism.⁸ However, the available literature indicates a more specific gap: Sirry's reading of Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19 has not been sufficiently examined through a maqāshidī framework that simultaneously considers the semantic meaning of *al-dīn* and *al-Islām*, the Qur'anic context, the normative dimension of Prophetic revelation, and the broader objectives of the Qur'an. This gap is particularly important because a maqāshidī assessment can move the discussion beyond the binary opposition between "exclusive" and "inclusive" interpretations and instead evaluate whether an interpretation preserves the theological, ethical, and social objectives embedded within the Qur'anic discourse.

Based on this problem, the present study addresses two questions. First, how does Mun'im Sirry interpret Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19 in his critique of exclusivist salvation theology? Second, how can his interpretation be critically reconsidered through a maqāshidī approach to Qur'anic interpretation? Accordingly, this study aims to reconstruct Sirry's interpretation of the verse and critically evaluate its methodological and theological implications through the maqāshidī perspectives associated with Ibn 'Āshūr, Jasser Auda, and Abdul Mustaqīm. Rather than simply determining whether Sirry's interpretation is "inclusive" or "exclusive," this study seeks to investigate whether his reinterpretation of *al-Islām* adequately preserves the Qur'an's normative theological claim while simultaneously realizing its broader objectives of guidance, ethical reform, and human welfare. In this way, the study contributes to contemporary Qur'anic studies by bringing the debate over religious salvation into dialogue with the developing methodology of maqāshidī interpretation.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative library research design with a critical-analytical approach to examine Mun'im Sirry's interpretation of Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19 and to critically reassess it through Abdul Mustaqīm's *tafsīr maqāshidī* framework. The subject of the study is Sirry's interpretation of the expression *al-Islām* in Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19, particularly his reading of Hamka's interpretation in *Polemik Kitab Suci: Tafsīr Reformasi atas Kritik Al-Qur'an terhadap Agama Lain*. The study employs *tafsīr maqāshidī* not to replace conventional methods of Qur'anic interpretation, but as an analytical framework for identifying the purposes, values, and broader significance underlying the Qur'anic text. Abdul Mustaqīm conceptualizes *tafsīr maqāshidī* as an approach that seeks to uncover the purposes and ideal moral dimensions of Qur'anic verses while maintaining respect for the textual meaning of revelation.⁹

The data are collected through documentary research. The primary data consist of Mun'im Sirry's *Polemik Kitab Suci*, particularly the chapter "Menggugat Teologi Keselamatan Eksklusif," together with the relevant passages of Hamka's *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. Secondary data include *Tafsīr al-Manār*, *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān*, Ibn 'Āshūr's *al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, and relevant

⁸ Fiki Muzakiyah, *Konsep Islam Inklusif dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an (Penafsiran Q.S. Ali Imran: 19 dengan Pendekatan Ma'na-Cum-Maghẓa)* (Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2019).

⁹ Abdul Mustaqīm, *Tafsīr Maqashidi: Al-Qadlāyā al-Mu'āṣirah fī Ḍaw' al-Qur'ān wa al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyyah* (Yogyakarta: Idea Press, 2019), 12–13.

scholarly literature on Qur'anic interpretation, religious pluralism, and *tafsir maqāshidī*. The collection focuses particularly on Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:18–20 in order to examine Q.S. 3:19 within its immediate textual context rather than treating the verse as an isolated statement. This is consistent with Mustaqim's methodological emphasis on collecting relevant verses, reading them holistically, and considering both internal and external contexts in order to identify their maqāshid.¹⁰

The data are analyzed through the methodological principles of Abdul Mustaqim's *tafsir maqāshidī*. First, the study identifies the academic problem and relevant Qur'anic passage, namely the meaning of *al-Islām* in Q.S. 3:19 and its relation to the discourse of religious exclusivism and salvation. Second, the relevant verses and exegetical materials are examined holistically and contextually, particularly Q.S. 3:18–20. Third, the study conducts linguistic and exegetical analysis of key terms and compares Sirry's reconstruction of Hamka with the interpretations found in the selected tafsir sources. Fourth, the analysis distinguishes between the textual expression of the verse and its maqāshid, including the values, purposes, and ideal moral dimensions that can be derived from it. Finally, these findings are integrated to critically evaluate whether Sirry's universalization of *al-Islām* adequately represents the Qur'anic objectives of Q.S. 3:19. This procedure follows the central orientation of Mustaqim's methodology: maintaining a balance between textual fidelity and the pursuit of *maqāshid*, *maṣlaḥah*, and the avoidance of *mafsadah*.¹¹

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Sirry's Interpretation of Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19

Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19 states, "Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam" (*inna al-dīna 'inda Allāhi al-Islām*). The verse has frequently been understood as affirming the exclusive validity of Islam and, consequently, the restriction of salvation to its adherents. Mun'im Sirry approaches this issue within his broader critique of exclusivist salvation theology. Rather than reading Q.S. 3:19 independently, he places it alongside verses concerning the religious status and salvation of other communities, particularly Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]:62, Āli 'Imrān [3]:85, and al-Mā'idah [5]:48. His concern is to reconsider whether these verses necessarily establish a rigid exclusivist theology of salvation.¹²

A central element of Sirry's interpretation is the meaning of *al-Islām*. Drawing on modern reformist exegetes, particularly Rashīd Riḍā and Hamka, Sirry emphasizes the generic meaning of *islām* as submission and surrender to God. In this understanding, Islam is not merely the name of a particular religious community but expresses the fundamental orientation shared by the prophets: calling human beings to submit themselves to God and affirm His oneness. Sirry presents Hamka as explaining that the religion brought by the prophets, from Adam to Muhammad, is fundamentally characterized by submission to God.

¹⁰ Muhammad Naufal Hakim, "Maqāshidiyyah Integratif dan Prinsip Metodologi Teori Tafsir Maqāshidī Abdul Mustaqim," *Islamadina: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 24, no. 2 (2023): 219–220.

¹¹ Abdul Mustaqim, *Argumentasi Keniscayaan Tafsir Maqashidi sebagai Basis Moderasi Islam* (Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2019), 12.

¹² Mun'im A. Sirry, *Scriptural Polemics: The Qur'an and Other Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 65–99.

The distinction between prophetic communities therefore does not negate the common theological foundation of submission and monotheism.¹³

Sirry further highlights Hamka's distinction between formal religious identity and substantive submission. Islam, in this sense, is not adequately represented by an external identity alone, but by the purification of faith, intention, and human conduct in devotion to God. Hamka also emphasizes the universal character of Islam and rejects the idea that it belongs exclusively to a particular ethnicity or nation. This interpretation allows Sirry to understand *al-Islām* in Q.S. 3:19 as a universal theological principle rather than simply a communal designation.

The implication is significant for the question of salvation. Sirry's reading challenges an interpretation in which Q.S. 3:19 automatically excludes all non-Muslims from divine salvation. His discussion of Hamka also rejects a simplistic claim that Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:85 simply cancels Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]:62. At the same time, Sirry's reconstruction is directed toward an understanding of Islam that can sustain commitment to its theological principles without producing hostility toward other religious communities. Hamka's warning against religious fanaticism, which may generate contempt and violence toward other religions, reinforces this ethical dimension.

Thus, Sirry's interpretation rests on three interconnected points: (1) *al-Islām* signifies submission to God; (2) this submission represents a universal principle within the prophetic tradition; and (3) such a reading challenges rigid exclusivism in the theology of salvation. The next section examines whether this universalization of *al-Islām* fully corresponds to the Qur'anic objectives of Q.S. 3:19 through Ibn 'Āshūr's maqāshidī interpretation.

3.2. A Maqāshidī Reading of Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19 through Ibn 'Āshūr

All A maqāshidī reading of Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19 can be developed through Ibn 'Āshūr's interpretation in *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tamwīl*. Rather than treating the statement *inna al-dīna 'inda Allāhi al-Islām* merely as a declaration of religious identity, Ibn 'Āshūr examines its linguistic structure and theological implications. The verse reads:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعْغًا بَيْنَهُمْ
وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿١٩﴾

"Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam. And those who were given the Scripture did not differ except after knowledge had come to them - out of jealous animosity between themselves. And whoever disbelieves in the verses of Allah, then indeed, Allah is swift in [taking] account." (Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19)

Ibn 'Āshūr emphasizes the restrictive construction contained in the verse. According to him, the expression *al-dīn 'inda Allāh* followed by *al-Islām* indicates that the religion regarded as true before God is Islam. He therefore understands the verse as establishing a normative theological claim concerning the truth of Islam, rather than merely describing

¹³ Sirry, *Polemik Kitab Suci*, 131.

submission as a general human attitude.¹⁴ This linguistic observation is important because it demonstrates that the maqāshidī dimension of the verse cannot be separated from its explicit theological content.

Ibn 'Āshūr then explains the meaning of *dīn* and *Islām* in relation to the comprehensive religious system brought by the Prophet Muhammad. He notes that *Islām* may sometimes be used specifically for religious practices, while *īmān* refers to matters of belief; however, in the context of Q.S. 3:19, Islam encompasses the religion as a whole.¹⁵ Thus, Islam is not reduced either to external ritual practice or to an abstract concept of inward submission. Rather, it represents an integrated religious order consisting of belief, worship, ethical conduct, and divine guidance. This interpretation is significant for a maqāshidī reading because the objective of the verse is not simply to establish a communal label, but to affirm the completeness and integrity of the divinely prescribed way of life.

The maqāshidī dimension becomes clearer when Ibn 'Āshūr discusses the position of Islam in relation to the previous revealed religions. He explains that the revelation of Islam represents the completion of the divine religious guidance. In his discussion, the Qur'anic declaration that the religion accepted by God is Islam is connected with the perfection and completion of the religious system brought by Muhammad.³ Consequently, the verse can be understood as affirming the continuity of divine guidance while simultaneously establishing the normative status of the final revealed form of that guidance. Islam is universal in its orientation toward God, but its universality does not require the elimination of its specific prophetic and normative form.

From this perspective, the maqāshid of Q.S. 3:19 can be formulated as the establishment of a unified and complete system of divine guidance grounded in submission to God. Ibn 'Āshūr's interpretation therefore provides an important qualification to Sirry's reading. Sirry rightly emphasizes the substantive meaning of *islām* as submission to God, but Ibn 'Āshūr demonstrates that this meaning operates within a broader Qur'anic conception of Islam as a complete and normatively established religion. The maqāshidī reading consequently does not negate the universal dimension of submission; rather, it places that universal principle within the concrete framework of the final prophetic revelation.

This reading also allows Q.S. 3:19 to be understood without reducing it to rigid religious hostility. The verse establishes the theological normativity of Islam, while Ibn 'Āshūr's interpretation directs attention to the purpose and completeness of divine guidance, rather than merely constructing a boundary between religious communities. The maqāshidī significance of the verse, therefore, lies in affirming *tawḥīd*, submission to God, the integrity of divine guidance, and the normative completion of that guidance through the prophetic mission of Muhammad. This provides the analytical basis for critically reassessing Sirry's interpretation in the following section.

¹⁴ Muḥammad al-Tāhir Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, commentary on Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19, 188–190.

¹⁵ Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 189–190.

3.3. Beyond Exclusivism: A Critical Evaluation of Sirry through Maqāshidī Reading

This The preceding discussion shows that Mun'im Sirry's interpretation of Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19 seeks to challenge a rigid exclusivist understanding of salvation by emphasizing the generic meaning of *al-Islām* as submission to God. This approach is part of Sirry's broader engagement with Qur'anic passages concerning religious others and salvation. His analysis does not simply reject the Qur'anic claim concerning Islam; rather, it questions whether such a claim should automatically be translated into the exclusion of all other religious communities from divine salvation. Previous studies of Sirry similarly identify his approach as an attempt to reinterpret polemical Qur'anic verses through a more inclusive framework that emphasizes coexistence, religious freedom, and interreligious ethics.¹⁶

Nevertheless, the maqāshidī reading developed through Ibn 'Āshūr indicates that the universal meaning of *al-Islām* as submission cannot be detached from the normative meaning established by Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19 itself. The verse states: *إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ* "Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam." Ibn 'Āshūr pays particular attention to the linguistic construction of the verse and understands it as establishing a restriction: the religion that is true and recognized by Allah is Islam. His explanation therefore suggests that *al-Islām* in this context cannot be reduced exclusively to an abstract concept of inward surrender that is equally applicable to every religious system. Rather, the verse makes a normative theological assertion concerning the truth of Islam.¹⁷

At the same time, Ibn 'Āshūr's interpretation does not eliminate the fundamental meaning of Islam as submission to God. Instead, he places that submission within a complete religious system. In his discussion of Q.S. 3:19, *al-Islām* refers to the religion brought by Muhammad and encompasses the dimensions of belief, religious practice, and obedience. This point is significant because it prevents two opposite reductions. The first is to reduce Islam to a formal communal identity without considering its fundamental orientation toward God. The second is to universalize *islām* so broadly that its specific Qur'anic reference to the revealed religion brought by Muhammad becomes insignificant. Ibn 'Āshūr's interpretation allows these two dimensions to remain connected.

This reading is strengthened by considering the immediate Qur'anic context. Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:18 declares:

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُوا الْعِلْمِ قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٨﴾

"Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge - [that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice. There is no deity except Him, the Exalted in Might, the Wise".

It is followed immediately by Q.S. 3:19, which identifies Islam as the religion recognized by Allah. The passage therefore moves from *tawḥīd* to the affirmation of *al-dīn al-Islām*. Ibn 'Āshūr's broader maqāshidī methodology is important here because he treats linguistic structure and the internal relationships of Qur'anic discourse as essential to

¹⁶ Agus Iswanto, "Tinjauan Buku: Polemik Kitab Suci—Tafsir Reformasi atas Kritik Al-Qur'an terhadap Agama Lain," *Subuf* 7, no. 1 (2014): 125–139

¹⁷ Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 189–190.

identifying the purpose of a verse. Research on his method likewise demonstrates that Ibn 'Āshūr's maqāshidī interpretation seeks to derive the objectives of verses through close attention to Qur'anic language rather than imposing external objectives upon the text.¹⁸

The following verse further clarifies the relationship between submission and prophetic guidance. Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:20 states:

فَإِنْ أَسْلَمُوا فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا ﴿٢٠﴾

"If they submit, then they will be rightly guided."

Here, submission (*aslāmū*) is directly connected with guidance (*al-hidāyah*). Thus, within the sequence of Q.S. 3:18–20, Islam is not presented merely as an inward psychological condition. Submission to God is connected with divine guidance and the prophetic mission of Muhammad. Ibn 'Āshūr's interpretation consequently supports an understanding in which the universal theological principle of submission and the normative form of revealed guidance are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. This is consistent with studies of Ibn 'Āshūr's maqāshidī thought, which emphasize that his interpretation seeks to uncover the broader purposes of Qur'anic guidance while remaining grounded in the textual structure of revelation.¹⁹

From this perspective, Sirry's interpretation can be appreciated for correcting a simplistic form of exclusivism, particularly when Q.S. 3:19 is treated as an isolated proof-text for hostility toward other religions. His wider work demonstrates a sustained concern with how Qur'anic polemical passages have been interpreted in contemporary Muslim discourse, and his study of Q.S. 5:48, for example, examines how modern Muslim thinkers employ the Qur'anic command to "compete in good works" in discussions of religious pluralism.²⁰ The contribution of Sirry's approach therefore lies in opening a theological and ethical space in which commitment to Islam does not automatically imply social antagonism toward religious others.

However, the maqāshidī reassessment suggests that over-universalizing *al-Islām* also creates a different interpretive problem. If *al-Islām* is understood solely as a universal principle of submission that can be detached from the particular revelation brought by Muhammad, the normative theological claim of Q.S. 3:19 risks being weakened. Ibn 'Āshūr's interpretation indicates that the Qur'anic objective is not simply to promote the abstract virtue of submission, but to affirm the truth, coherence, and completeness of the divine religious guidance embodied in Islam. This does not require translating theological normativity into social exclusion. Rather, it distinguishes between theological normativity and social hostility, two categories that should not be conflated.

¹⁸ Fatmah Taufik Hidayat, "Pemikiran Ibn 'Āshūr Tentang Qawai'd Al-Maqāshid Al-Lughawiyah Serta Implikasinya dalam Menafsirkan Al-Qur'an," *An-Nida'* 45, no. 1 (2021): 109–124, <https://doi.org/10.24014/an-nida.v45i1.19275>

¹⁹ Tazul Islam, "Ibn Ashur's Views on Maqosid al-Qur'an: An Analysis," *Journal of Ma'alim al-Qur'an wa al-Sunnah* 14, no. 2 (2018): 147–161,

²⁰ Mun'im A. Sirry, "Compete with One Another in Good Works': Exegesis of Qur'an Verse 5.48 and Contemporary Muslim Discourses on Religious Pluralism," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 20, no. 4 (2009): 423–438.

Accordingly, the maqāshidī reading proposed in this study occupies a position between rigid exclusivism and unrestricted religious relativism. It affirms Sirry's insight that Islam cannot be reduced to a mere communal identity and that submission to Allah constitutes its fundamental theological meaning. At the same time, Ibn 'Āshūr's reading demonstrates that such submission is articulated by the Qur'an through a specific and comprehensive revealed religion. The resulting formulation is therefore universal submission within normative divine guidance. Such a reading preserves the theological claim of Q.S. 3:19 while avoiding the assumption that theological exclusivity necessarily entails social hostility toward other religious communities.

The contribution of this maqāshidī reassessment, therefore, lies in showing that the problem with the exclusivist reading is not necessarily the Qur'an's assertion of Islam's normative truth, but the tendency to transform that theological assertion into an undifferentiated judgment concerning every individual adherent of another religion. Conversely, the solution to exclusivism does not necessarily require dissolving the normative meaning of *al-Islām*. By reading Q.S. 3:19 through Ibn 'Āshūr, this study proposes that *tawḥīd*, submission, divine guidance, and normative religious completeness can be understood as interconnected dimensions of the verse. This provides a more balanced reading of Sirry's contribution while simultaneously demonstrating the added value of a maqāshidī approach to the interpretation of Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19.²¹

CONCLUSION

This study finds that Mun'im Sirry's interpretation of Q.S. Āli 'Imrān [3]:19 emphasizes the universal meaning of *al-Islām* as submission to God. Through this interpretation, Sirry seeks to challenge a rigid exclusivist understanding of salvation and to open a more inclusive theological perspective toward other religious communities.

However, Ibn 'Āshūr's maqāshidī reading in *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* shows that the meaning of *al-Islām* as submission cannot be separated from its normative meaning as the complete divine religion revealed through Prophet Muhammad. Therefore, a maqāshidī reading of Q.S. 3:19 does not require abandoning Islam's theological normativity, but rather distinguishes it from social hostility toward other religions. In this sense, the verse affirms submission to God within the framework of divine guidance, providing a position beyond both rigid exclusivism and unrestricted theological relativism.

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