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## AN INTERRELIGIOUS DISPUTE ON THE CONTROVERSIAL CASE OF ELIA MYRON'S CORRECTION TO TAFSIR: AN ANALYSIS BASED ON KIM KNOTT'S FRAMEWORK

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### Abstract

This article examines the concept of religious tolerance through Qur'anic exegesis, applying the *insider-outsider* framework introduced by Kim Knott. The study is prompted by a social fact that has generated public controversy and gone viral, namely the request by Elia Myron, a Christian, to Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs to conduct a re-examination of the interpretation of Surah al-A'raf [7]:157. Employing a qualitative research design, the study uses content analysis grounded in the *insider-outsider* approach to evaluate the discourse and responses arising from the issue. The findings indicate that applying the insider-outsider perspective to Elia Myron's open letter to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which calls for a review of Qur'anic exegesis, has the potential to provoke tensions and deepen

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divisions among religious communities in Indonesia. From an outsider's standpoint, Elia's action is widely supported and perceived as a manifestation of tolerance by the majority of Christians, as the request specifically emphasizes revisiting the exegesis of Surah al-A'raf [7]:157, which includes references to the Torah and the Bible. However, from the insider standpoint, the action is interpreted as encroaching too deeply on Islamic teachings and is therefore seen as neglecting a key indicator within the discourse of religious moderation, namely tolerance, as underscored by Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs. In addition, several social media posts related to Elia's request to review the Qur'anic exegesis are found to have explicitly served as early triggers for discourse containing intolerant elements, thereby potentially undermining harmonious relations among religious communities, particularly between Muslims and Christians.

**Keywords:** Interreligious Dialogue; *Insider-Outsider* perspectives; Qur'anic interpretation; Kim Knott.

### **Khulasah**

Makalah ini bertujuan meneliti konsep toleransi beragama melalui pentafsiran al-Quran dengan menerapkan kerangka *insider-outsider* yang diperkenalkan oleh Kim Knott. Kajian ini berpunca daripada satu fakta sosial yang mencetuskan polemik serta tular di ruang awam, iaitu permohonan Elia Myron, seorang penganut Kristian, kepada Kementerian Agama Indonesia agar dilakukan semakan semula terhadap pentafsiran Surah al-A'raf [7]:157. Kajian ini menggunakan reka bentuk kualitatif dengan teknik analisis kandungan, berasaskan pendekatan *insider-outsider* bagi menilai wacana dan respons yang terhasil daripada isu tersebut. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa penerapan perspektif *insider-outsider* terhadap surat terbuka Elia Myron kepada Kementerian Agama Indonesia, yang menuntut semakan semula tafsir al-

Quran, berpotensi mencetuskan ketegangan serta menyumbang kepada perpecahan antara penganut agama di Indonesia. Dari sudut *outsider*, tindakan Elia menerima sokongan kuat dan ditanggapi sebagai manifestasi toleransi oleh sebahagian besar penganut Kristian, kerana permohonan itu secara khusus menekankan semakan semula tafsir Surah al-A'raf [7]:157 yang mengandungi rujukan kepada Taurat dan Bible. Namun demikian, dari sudut *insider*, tindakan tersebut ditafsirkan sebagai terlalu menyentuh aspek ajaran Islam, sekali gus dianggap mengabaikan indikator penting dalam gagasan kesederhanaan beragama, iaitu toleransi, sebagaimana ditegaskan oleh Kementerian Agama Indonesia. Selain itu, beberapa hantaran di media sosial yang berkaitan permintaan Elia untuk menyemak semula tafsir al-Quran didapati secara jelas telah menjadi pencetus awal kepada wacana yang mengandungi unsur tidak toleran, dan seterusnya berpotensi menjelaskan kerukunan hubungan antara umat beragama, khususnya antara Islam dan Kristian.

**Kata kunci:** Dialog Antara Agama; Perspektif *Insider-Outsider*; Tafsir al-Quran, Kim Knott.

## Introduction

The digital era and the advent of social media have changed the structure of religious authority, which was once considered stable.<sup>1</sup> In the past, the interpretation and dissemination of Hadiths were carried out only by religious figures such as *kiai*, *ustaz*, or *madrasah* teachers. Now, almost anyone can do it, even without formal religious education.<sup>2</sup> As a result, religious authority has become

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<sup>1</sup> Grace Arnot et al., "Australian Youth Perspectives on the Role of Social Media in Climate Action," *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 48(1) (2024), 100111, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anzjph.2023.100111>.

<sup>2</sup> Abdul Majit and Miski, "Pembelajaran al-Qur'an Secara Digital: Pergeseran Sistem Isnad dan Peneguhan Otoritas Baru," *Jurnal*

more widespread, open, and no longer tied to specific figures. This shift should not be viewed negatively; rather, it should be addressed with tolerance and efforts to reduce the tendency toward domination and hegemony in the digital religious sphere, especially on social media.<sup>3</sup>

Through social media, users can establish and nurture virtual relationships, engaging in cooperative exchanges and social networking across diverse formats, whether textual, visual, or audiovisual.<sup>4</sup> One of its key strengths lies in its ability to facilitate real-time, two-way communication that transcends traditional boundaries of time, location, and physical presence, making social interaction more immediate and far-reaching than ever before.<sup>5</sup>

The ease of access to social media allows people to freely express their opinions without thinking about the consequences.<sup>6</sup> This freedom allows for the circulation of various content writings, narratives, and images that can be considered inappropriate and have the potential to cause anger, hatred, or hostility, especially if conveyed by influential figures. Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, and X often become spaces for verbal attacks,

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*SMaRT (Studi Masyarakat, Religi, Dan Tradisi)* 9(1) (2023), 133-145, <https://doi.org/10.18784/smart.v9i1.1795>.

- <sup>3</sup> Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy, "Pesantren Online: Pergeseran Otoritas Keagamaan di Dunia Maya," *Living Islam: Journal of Islamic Discourses* 2(2) (2019), 169. <https://doi.org/10.14421/lijid.v2i2.2010>.
- <sup>4</sup> Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy, Irwan Abdullah, and Mustaqim Pabbajah, "The Superficial Religious Understanding in Hadith Memes: Mediatization of Hadith in the Industrial Revolution 4.0," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 20(60) (2021), 92-114.
- <sup>5</sup> Uswatun Hasanah and Busro Busro, "Hold Your Fingers: The Communication Ethics on WhatsApp Based on the Hadith," *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication* 39(3) (2023), 239-254, <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2023-3903-13>.
- <sup>6</sup> Bahar Urhan et al., "Social Media Use and Social Capital: Social Media Usage Habits and Perceptions of School Administrators," *Heliyon* 10(1) (2024), e23293, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e23293>.

defamation, and incitement.<sup>7</sup> A current example of this trend is the controversial statement by Elia Myron, who publicly urged Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs to revise its interpretation of the Qur'an. His appeal stems from concerns that the Qur'anic interpretation references the Bible, the Christian holy scripture, as part of the theological basis for affirming the prophethood of Muhammad following Jesus ('Isa), a stance he finds objectionable.<sup>8</sup>

Elia's statement has sparked an ongoing controversy that has yet to find common ground between Muslim and Christian communities. His open letter urging the Ministry of Religious Affairs to revise Qur'anic interpretation has drawn strong reactions from many Muslims. Together with his Christian supporters, he continued to assert that his actions reflected a form of religious tolerance, namely a call not to refer to the Bible to reinforce Islamic theological claims.

This controversial issue will be further examined through the perspective of Kim Knott's *insider-outsider* framework. This analytical model, which is widely used in academic studies of religion, whether related to interfaith dialogue, studies of religious minorities, or media studies of religion, provides a way to analyze matters related to belief systems, shifts in religious worldviews, concepts of

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<sup>7</sup> Trisha Dowerah Baruah, "Effectiveness of Social Media as a Tool of Communication and Its Potential for Technology Enabled Connections: A Micro-Level Study," *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications* 2(5) (2012), 1-10.

<sup>8</sup> Boim Boim, "Sosok Elia Myron, TikTokers Viral Yang Minta Kemenag Mereformasi Tafsir Al Quran," *Kabarsleman.com*, November 26, 2023, accessed on date December 20, 2024, <https://sleman.pikiran-rakyat.com/viral/pr-3047402119/sosok-elia-myron-tiktokers-viral-yang-minta-kemenag-mereformasi-tafsir-al-quran?page=all>.

divinity, and much more.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, as noted by Amin Abdullah, this approach has evolved to encompass a broader range of historical and cultural dimensions, thereby enhancing its applicability to contemporary interreligious discourse.<sup>10</sup>

Kim Knott successfully explained the difference between religion as a cultural tradition and religion as a personal belief. He made a significant contribution by offering a conceptual framework that helps address various challenges in the study of religion in academia. The idea of *insider-outsider* perspectives that he developed has been influential in shaping researchers' methodological and theoretical approaches to the critical analysis of religious phenomena.

In fact, many academics have critically examined Kim Knott's insights on *insider-outsider* perspectives. Some of these include works by figures such as Johannes and David,<sup>11</sup> Sonya and Jennifer,<sup>12</sup> Claudia Seise,<sup>13</sup> Deqing

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<sup>9</sup> Kim Knott, "Insider/Outsider Perspectives," in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. John R. Hinnells (London: Routledge Taylor and Fancis Group, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> M. Amin Abdullah, "Relevansi Studi Agama-Agama Dalam Milenium Ketiga," in *Mencari Islam (Studi Islam Dengan Berbagai Pendekatan)*, ed. M. Amin Abdullah (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2000), 5.

<sup>11</sup> Johannes Lindvall and David Rueda, "The Insider-Outsider Dilemma," *British Journal of Political Science* 44(2) (2014), 460-475, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123412000804>.

<sup>12</sup> Sonya Corbin Dwyer and Jennifer L. Buckle, "The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8(1) (2009), 54-63, <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800105>.

<sup>13</sup> Claudia Seise, "The Muslim Researcher Reflections on Insider/Outsider Research in Indonesia," *Journal of Islam in Asia* 16(1) (2016), 297-324.

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Zhou and Wenjie Wang,<sup>14</sup> Peter Carey,<sup>15</sup> Ahmadvand and Karami.<sup>16</sup> Several of these scholarly works have explored the *insider-outsider* framework from diverse angles. However, few, if any, have specifically addressed the theme of religious tolerance, which is the central focus of this study. Therefore, this research aims to fill that gap by contributing a new dimension to existing literature. It also seeks to serve as a foundational reference for applying Kim Knott's *insider-outsider* approach to contemporary issues in religious discourse.

### Methodology

This article employs qualitative methods, specifically desk research. Primary data consisted of Elia Myron's narrative and netizen responses circulating on social media platforms. Other references, such as academic books, journal articles, websites, and other relevant sources, became secondary data to support thematic exploration. Data were collected through documentation techniques and then analyzed using *content analysis*. This method of analysis is designed to interpret the collected data in depth using Kim Knott's *insider-outsider* framework. In addition, the analysis also involved Islamic perspectives and approaches to examine interfaith disputes in the controversial case of Elia Myron's interpretation correction.

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<sup>14</sup> Deqing Zhou and Wenjie Wang, "Insider, Outsider and Information Heterogeneity," *The North American Journal of Economics and Finance* 53 (2020), 101193, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.najef.2020.101193>.

<sup>15</sup> Peter B.R. Carey, "Outsider Insiders Four Officers' Exile Conversations with Diponegoro, 1830-1837," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal, Land- En Volkenkunde* 178(4) (2022), 440-476, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-bja10045>.

<sup>16</sup> Mostafa Ahmadvand and Ezatollah Karami, "Social Impacts Evaluation and Insider-Outsider Paradigm: Floodwater Spreading Project on the Gareh-Bygone Plain as an Illustrative Case," *Evaluation and Program Planning* 65 (2017), 69-76, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2017.07.004>.

This is important for providing a normative-theological foundation for evaluating the substance of Elia Myron's proposed *tafsir* correction and assessing its impact on Muslims.

### **Kim Knott's *Insider-Outsider* Framework: An Approach to Religious Studies**

The debate over *insider-outsider* perspectives gained prominence in the mid-1980s, particularly amid heated discussions about the study of Sikhism. At the heart of the matter was the question of who had the right to understand and describe Sikh traditions, and how researchers' motivations, perspectives, and biases influenced their studies. Much criticism was directed at Western studies of Sikhism, especially the work of W.H. McLeod, who was accused of undermining the integrity of the Sikh faith by using a historical and contextual critical approach.<sup>17</sup>

This debate has led scholars to revisit the phenomenological approach to religious studies. This approach is supported by figures such as Kristensen, Van der Leeuw, Otto, Eliade, Cantwell Smith and Ninian Smart. They argue that although religious experience is unique and immeasurable, it can still be understood through empathy by trying to see religion from the perspective of *insiders*.<sup>18</sup> Although it is difficult to understand the entirety of the sacred, its essence or manifestation remains intelligible. For supporters of phenomenology, the main goal is to understand the position of *insiders* through empathy and imagination, while avoiding judgments of right and wrong regarding religious beliefs, as this is the domain of theology and philosophy.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Knott, "Insider/Outsider Perspectives," 244.

<sup>18</sup> Jason N. Blum, "Retrieving Phenomenology of Religion as a Method for Religious Studies," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80(4) (2012), 1025-1048, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfs080>.

<sup>19</sup> Knott, "Insider/Outsider Perspectives," 244.

The phenomenology of religion requires the use of the concept of *insiders-outsiders* as described by Kim Knott. This discourse is closely related to the differences in experience and understanding between Western and Muslim scholars in their interpretations of Islamic teachings. For Muslims, *insiders* are Muslims, while *outsiders* are non-Muslims who study Islam.<sup>20</sup> By understanding the relationship between religion, culture, and society, Kim Knott developed a scientific method for analyzing the position of religion in contemporary Western society.<sup>21</sup>

Russell McCutcheon expands on the concept of *insiders-outsiders* by dividing it into four responses, namely: autonomy of religious experience in line with the phenomenological approach, reductionism when religion is viewed scientifically from an *outsider's* perspective, neutrality or agnosticism of method as seen in Ninian Smart's approach, and reflexivity. He explains these four categories using two terms from Kenneth Pike: the *emic* perspective, which derives from the *insider's* point of view, and the *etic* perspective, which derives from the *outsider's* point of view.<sup>22</sup>

After explaining the concept of *insiders* and *outsiders*, Kim Knott then provided several examples to illustrate how this issue is applied in practice. He moved from the theoretical realm to the methodological aspects, referring to the work of Junker and Emmans in the 1950s, which divided the roles of social-religious relations into four basic

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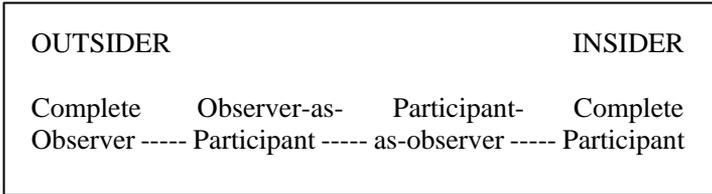
<sup>20</sup> Kim Knott, "How to Study Religion," in *Religions in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations* (London: Routledge, 2016), 26.

<sup>21</sup> Kim Knott, "Community and Locality in the Study of Religions," in *Secular Theories on Religion: Current Perspectives*, ed. Tim Jensen and Mikael Rothstein (Denmark: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2000), 90-91.

<sup>22</sup> Russell T. McCutcheon, *The Insider-Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion* (London: Cassel, 1999).

positions. In this regard, Kim Knott draws the following diagram:

Diagram 1. Four elements of the *insider-outsider*



Kim Knott's four elements of the *insider-outsider* researcher's position, as outlined above, stem from the current intellectual and methodological crisis or schism in the humanities and social sciences, in which secular reasoning has been placed in the position of inquiry into ideological and theological matters. According to Knott, the Sikh studies debate is not a function of the *insider-outsider* problem but of the modernists' shift in thinking from religious to secular perspectives. Therefore, for the way forward, Kim Knott offers a postmodern response, namely the abandonment of the dichotomous *insider-outsider* view and its replacement with a more dynamic view where everyone participates in the formulation of narratives about religion.<sup>23</sup>

Kim Knott's approach to the study of religion offers an alternative that seeks to foster balance and dialogue among the key elements in religious research. According to Knott, the *insider*, *outsider*, and *research subject* (the religious community under study) should not be viewed as isolated entities or in a hierarchical relationship. Rather, they should be understood as part of a circular,

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<sup>23</sup> Kim Knott, "Inside, Outside and the Space in-between: Territories and Boundaries in the Study of Religion," *Temenos* 44(1) (2008), 41-66, <https://doi.org/10.33356/temenos.4597>.

complementary, and reflexive process.<sup>24</sup> The goal of religious studies, in Knott's view, is to create a meeting point for dialogue, not a fusion or blending of different religious teachings. This approach creates space for meaningful interaction and a deeper understanding of diverse religious perspectives while preserving their distinct identities and core differences.<sup>25</sup>

### **Interpretation of The Qur'an al-A'raf [7]: 157 in the Perspective of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Indonesia**

The main issue of contention between Islam and Christianity stems from the Ministry of Religious Affairs' interpretation of the Qur'an al-A'raf [7]: 157. Elia Myron believes that this interpretation uses quotations from the Torah to support Islamic theological assumptions. This assessment is evident in the Ministry of Religious Affairs' explanation as follows:

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ  
فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ  
وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ  
وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ...

“Those who follow a Messenger, an *ummi* (non-literate) Prophet (whose name) they find written in the Torah and Bible which are with them, who enjoins the good and forbids the evil, and who makes lawful for them all that is good and forbids them all that is evil, and

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<sup>24</sup> Manuel A. Vásquez and Kim Knott, “Three Dimensions of Religious Place Making in Diaspora,” *Global Networks* 14(3) (2014), 326-347, <https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12062>.

<sup>25</sup> Kim Knott, *The Location of Religion A Spatial Analysis* (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2014), 77-79.

releases the burdens and fetters that are upon them...".<sup>26</sup>

According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs' interpretation, this verse indicates that the coming of the Prophet Muhammad as the last prophet was mentioned in the Torah and the Bible. Therefore, the Ministry of Religious Affairs quotes several verses from Genesis xxi:13, 18; Deuteronomy xviii:15; and the Bible of John xiv:16 as references to Muhammad's prophethood. The interpretation also explains that some Jews and Christians are considered to have hidden or altered the news about the arrival of the last Prophet in their scriptures. Even so, some parts of the Old Testament and New Testament are still understood as signs of the appearance of the Prophet Muhammad, a Prophet at the end of time from the descendants of Ishmael.<sup>27</sup>

Wahbah al-Zuhayli, a *mufassir* with a *fiqhi* style, interprets this verse in line with the interpretation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. He explains that the Torah and the Bible contain references to the coming of the Prophet Muhammad. Al-Zuhayli quotes Deuteronomy chapter 33, which confirms that coming from Sinai refers to the descent of the Torah to Moses; shining from Seir refers to the teachings of Jesus; and appearing from Mount Paran refers to the descent of the Qur'an in the region of Mecca, because Mount Paran is understood to be a mountainous area in that city. Al-Zuhayli also quotes John chapter 15 about the coming of "*Faraqlith*." He explains that the term *Faraqlith* in Hebrew means Ahmad or Muhammad, and is understood by some scholars as a

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<sup>26</sup> Kementerian Agama RI, *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya (Edisi Yang Disempurnakan)* (Jakarta: Departemen Agama RI, 2011), 3: 497.

<sup>27</sup> RI, 497-498.

prophecy about the coming of the last Prophet, Muhammad SAW.<sup>28</sup>

According to Ibn 'Ashur, this verse is closely related to the principle of faith in Allah and in the messenger when he actually comes. They are required to commit to accepting and following the messenger when he appears. Therefore, this verse serves as *bushra* (good news) about the coming of the Prophet Muhammad. Ibn 'Ashur's explanation refers to the command of *nubuwwat* in the Old Testament, Deuteronomy x to xiv and xviii.<sup>29</sup> This interpretation is consistent with M. Quraish Shihab's interpretation in *Tafsir al-Mishbah*.<sup>30</sup>

Hamka, in *Tafsir al-Azhar*, provides a lengthy explanation of this verse. He states that earlier holy books, particularly the Torah and the Bible, contain numerous references to the coming of the final prophet. Therefore, at the time of the Prophet Muhammad's emergence, hope for the arrival of the final prophet was widespread among Jews and Christians. This is clearly stated in several previous books, such as Deuteronomy Chapter 18, Deuteronomy Chapter 32 verse 21, Deuteronomy Chapter 33 verses 1 and 2, Genesis Chapter 77 verse 20, Genesis Chapter 49 verse 10, Psalms (Zabur) Chapter 45, the Spirit of Truth, Paraclit, the Book of the Prophet Haggai, Chapter 2, verse 7, the hint from 'Isa al-Masih himself in the Qur'an, Surah al-Fath 48:29, and the Book of the Prophet Yeyasa chapter 42, verses 1 to 21.<sup>31</sup>

From this interpretation, it can be concluded that the signs of the coming of the Prophet Muhammad have been

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<sup>28</sup> Wahbah al-Zuhayli, *Tafsir al-Munir fi al-'Aqidah wa al-Shar'iah wa al-Manhaj* (Beirut: Dar al Fikr, 2009), 5: 127-128.

<sup>29</sup> Muhammad al-Tahir Ibn 'Ashur, *Tafsir al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir* (Tunisia: Dar al-Tunisiyah, 1984), 9: 134.

<sup>30</sup> M. Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002), 5: 270-272.

<sup>31</sup> Haji Abdul Malik Abdulkarim Amrullah, *Tafsir al-Azhar* (Singapore: Pustaka Nasional PTE LTD Singapura, 1990), 4: 2529-2556.

clearly explained in the Torah and the Bible. The Book of John mentions that his arrival will make the world aware of sin, righteousness, and judgment.<sup>32</sup> It also states that there will be a comforter sent as the Spirit of Truth from the Father.<sup>33</sup> In addition, there are many other references to the arrival of the Prophet Muhammad as the final prophet from the descendants of Ishmael.

In the Ministry of Religious Affairs' interpretation of the Torah, several indications suggest that the Prophet Muhammad is among the promised prophets. It explains that the chosen people will come from the "brothers of the Bani Israil," namely the Bani Isma'il (the Arab people), because Muhammad is a descendant of Ishmael. Conversely, Christians interpret the *Nubuwwat* as referring to the Prophet Jesus, while also believing that Jesus was crucified. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, this view is not in accordance with prophecy, as a prophet cannot be killed. The Torah also states that God gave revelation to Moses at Sinai and to Jesus at Seir, and that He radiated His light from Paran, understood to be Mecca. In this place, revelation was given to Muhammad SAW.<sup>34</sup>

This is the Ministry of Religious Affairs' interpretation of the inconsistencies/differences between the contents of the Torah, the Bible, and the Qur'an. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, including in other interpretive references, there are still signs of Muhammad's prophethood and apostleship, which is why some Jewish and Hebrew scholars recognized the truth of the news and immediately believed in Muhammad and the message he brought, such as 'Abd Allah bin Salam from the Jewish and Tamim al-Dari from the Christians.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Alkitab, *Yohanes 16: 8-11* (Jakarta: Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia, 2013).

<sup>33</sup> Alkitab, *Yohanes 15: 26* (Jakarta: Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia, 2013).

<sup>34</sup> RI, *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya*, 498.

<sup>35</sup> RI, *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya*, 499.

## **Revising Qur'anic Interpretation: Elia Myron's Open Letter to Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs**

The controversy that has been raging on social media, especially TikTok, began with Elia Myron's statement to the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs about the need for reform in the interpretation of the Qur'an.<sup>36</sup> This issue arose after he appeared on Dr. Richard Lee's podcast on November 14, 2023, discussing the Israel-Palestine conflict from a Christian perspective. During the conversation, Elia stated that Jesus Christ and 'Isa al-Masih are two different figures. He believes that equating the two in Islamic teachings is based solely on theological interpretations of the Qur'an, not on the Bible.

Elia emphasized that tolerance means "allowing," and he respects Muslims' beliefs about the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. However, he argued that there is no historical evidence in Islamic sources to support this view. According to him, Muslim beliefs actually contradict historical records in Christian tradition. Elia also highlights the difference in the story of 'Isa's birth: Islam states that 'Isa was born under a palm tree, whereas Christian tradition states that he was born in a sheep pen in Migdal Eder, Bethlehem. He claims that there are no palm trees in Bethlehem and, therefore, that Islamic records are inaccurate.<sup>37</sup>

The controversy intensified after Elia posted a statement on TikTok as an open letter to the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. He asked the Ministry to cease using biblical verses to support Islamic interpretations, as he argued that the text of the Bible should be understood only in the context of the Christian faith. He

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<sup>36</sup> Elia Myron, "Perang Israel vs Palestina Dari Pandangan Nasrani?!" *Youtube*, dr. Richard Lee, *MARS*, November 14, 2023, accessed on date December 20, 2023. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z\\_NLX4rGntI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_NLX4rGntI).

<sup>37</sup> Elia Myron, "Perang Israel vs Palestina Dari Pandangan Nasrani?!".

accused the Ministry of incorporating verses from the Bible into its interpretation of the Qur'an, Surah al-A'raf 7:157, to support the concept of the coming of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.<sup>38</sup> According to Elia, this practice has the potential to damage interfaith relations. He also emphasized that, according to the teachings of the Church Fathers and the early disciples of Jesus, there would be no prophet after Jesus Christ.

Elia refutes the notion that the Torah and the Bible in Christian tradition have been falsified. According to him, the Torah and the Bible that Muslims refer to as revelations to the prophets Moses and Jesus are different from the books used by Christians today. He asserts that the Christian version of the Torah is not a direct revelation to Moses, but was written by Moses and continued by Joshua. Similarly, in the Christian tradition, the Bible is not a book revealed to the Prophet 'Isa, but rather a collection of stories and teachings about Jesus written by his disciples and later compiled into the Synoptic Gospels. Because the concepts of the Torah and the Bible in Islam and Christianity are different, Elia concludes that Christian scriptures cannot be used to interpret the Qur'an.<sup>39</sup>

To strengthen his argument, Elia quotes the Qur'an, Surah al-Kafirun 109:6 as the basis for religious tolerance.<sup>40</sup> He makes an analogy, if verses from the Qur'an are used to justify Christian doctrines such as the Trinity or the divinity of Jesus, Muslims would certainly reject them. However, in another post, he makes a stronger claim by stating that any scripture after the Bible, including the Qur'an, is false. He argues that the Bible was completed and ratified in the 3rd

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<sup>38</sup> RI, *Al-Qur'an dan Tafsirnya*, 498.

<sup>39</sup> Myron, "Perang Israel vs Palestina Dari Pandangan Nasrani!?"

<sup>40</sup> Elia Myron, "Kesalahan Mengenai Revisi dan Reformasi oleh Nona Manis," *TikTok*, accessed on date December 20, 2023, <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSNp9PMvm/>.

century AD by the early Catholic Church, so there has been no divine revelation since then.<sup>41</sup>

Based on this belief, Elia asked the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs to review its interpretation of the Qur'an so that Muslim-Christian relations could be more peaceful and not cause theological friction. He hoped that true tolerance could be maintained for the sake of religious harmony in Indonesia. Elia reiterated that the Torah and the Bible, as understood by Muslims, were fundamentally different from the holy books held by Christians.

### ***Insider-Outsider Analysis: The Position of Elia Myron and 'Netizens' in the Debate over the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Interpretation of the Qur'an***

Elia Myron's call for the reform of Qur'anic interpretation directed at Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs has sparked significant public reaction, particularly because he is positioned as an *outsider-observer as participant* in the religious discourse. His statement, posted on Tik-Tok, gained substantial traction, amassing over 7.4 million views, 79.5 thousand likes, and more than 91.2 thousand comments. The video drew a wide range of responses from netizens, reflecting diverse interpretations and emotional reactions to his appeal. For analytical purposes, the author classifies public sentiment surrounding Elia's open letter into two main categories: positive and negative sentiment.

*First*, positive sentiment. Some netizens responded favorably to Elia's explanation, praising his clarity, intellect, and thoughtful manner of speaking. Others expressed their support for his initiative to push for the reform of Qur'anic interpretation and offered prayers for the success of his mission. Many comments also applauded his efforts to advocate for what they see as the truth of

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<sup>41</sup> Elia Myron, "Viral Elia Myron," *TikTok*, accessed on date December 20, 2023, <https://Vt.Tiktok.Com/ZSNpKUn2U/>.

Christianity. Below are examples of netizen comments that reflect this category of positive sentiment:

Table 1: Netizen Comments (Positive)

UserID	Comment
05+	Some people still don’t get it, even though Elia explained it so clearly.
Alexwan	That’s the truth, hard to accept, but true. Stay strong, Elia!
Marilan Situmorang	Keep going, Elia. May Jesus bless you.
Longginus22 Minaisti	Well done, Elia! You’re sharp and insightful.
ALFRED	I completely agree, don’t be afraid to speak the truth.
Yentri Telaumbanua	Wow, what a powerful explanation, Elia! Keep spreading the Bible of Christ. God bless, and may Christ’s peace be with us all.

*Second*, negative sentiment. Netizen comments also contained narratives that tended to convey negative sentiment and, in some cases, escalated into hate speech. These narratives often stemmed from a lack of understanding of Elia’s explanation, disagreements with Elia’s views, or direct personal attacks against Elia. Below are examples of comments categorized as negative sentiment and hate speech:

Table 2: Netizen Comments (Negative)

UserID	Comment
---	If one day God grants me the chance to confront those who have disrespected Islam, Elia would be the first person I’d seek out.
Xysaftr	Honestly, I can’t grasp what you’re trying to say, Elia.
Ricookta_24	You’re lucky we live in a time with human rights protections; otherwise, you’d have been dealt with already.

taehyungV	What’s the purpose of this letter? What exactly are you asking for? Don’t make things more confusing.
dewi anggraeni	Phrases like “then,” “why,” and “isn’t it” are frequently used to frame questions that seem misunderstood, yet the answers reflect a personal bias.
Gaza	Elia, your words are deeply hurtful to the Muslim community. <i>Hasbunallahu wa ni‘mal wakil.</i>

Based on the two examples of netizen comments, we conclude that those expressing positive sentiment are predominantly Christian individuals who support Elia and resonate with his concerns regarding the portrayal of Jesus Christ, who, within Islamic doctrine, is equated with the Prophet ‘Isa. On the other hand, those demonstrating negative sentiment or engaging in hate speech appear to be primarily Muslim commenters who took offense at Elia’s proposition to reinterpret the Qur’an without referencing the Bible as a contextual explanation for its verses. This reaction stems from the fact that, in Islamic belief, Jesus is recognized as a prophet and messenger of God, just like other prophets in the Islamic tradition.

Elia’s open letter addressed to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, in which he advocates for a reinterpretation of the Qur’an, also elicited responses from various religious scholars. The author analyzes these reactions using Kim Knott’s *insider-outsider* framework, where “*insiders*” refer to Muslim scholars and “*outsiders*” to Christian scholars, both offering commentary on Elia’s letter. The experts’ perspectives cover a range of theological interpretations, including analyses of Qur’anic verses and Hadith, narratives from the Bible, and broader Islamic and Christian understandings of the universal truth represented by Jesus Christ, or ‘Isa al-Masih.

### 1. *Outsider* perspective

Elia's open letter to the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, which called for a reinterpretation of the Qur'an, has sparked controversy across Indonesian society, particularly among the Muslim community. Elia proposed that the Ministry revise the Qur'anic interpretation to exclude explanatory elements drawn from the Torah and Bible, a suggestion that many Muslims perceived as both provocative and offensive.

Interestingly, Elia's stance has not received unanimous support even from within the Christian community. For example, Pastor Esra Soru gave a calmer and more balanced response. He not only highlighted the differences between Jesus Christ and 'Isa al-Masih, but also asked that their similarities be noted. According to him, the Qur'an also describes Jesus as the son of Maryam and Yusuf, names that are similar to the Hebrew forms, Mary and Joseph.

Using a linguistic approach, he showed that Arabic and Hebrew are very close as Semitic languages. He gave several examples of similarities: *Ullah*, *Illah*, *Allah*, and *Elloah* all refer to God; *abodah* (Hebrew) is equivalent to *ibadah* (Arabic); *gahar* and *hajar*; Gabriel and Jibril; and Gehenna and *Jahannam*. He also explains that the name 'Isa originated from a process of linguistic change: from *Yoshua* (Hebrew) to *Iesous* (Greek), then *Jesus*, and finally 'Isa in the Arabic tradition.

He adds that the Arabic term *al-Masih* is equivalent to *Masih* or *Hamasih* in Hebrew, and to *Messiah* or *Christos* in Greek. Therefore, linguistically and historically, he assessed that Jesus Christ in Christianity and 'Isa al-Masih in Islam refer to the exact figure. However, a major difference arises in the theological interpretations of the two religions. For Pastor Soru, because Christianity came

first, Christian teachings are considered to have theological primacy in understanding this figure.<sup>42</sup>

Pastor Soru's perspective on the similarities between Jesus and 'Isa al-Masih is echoed by Pastor Mell Atock, who similarly acknowledges the linguistic and historical connections.<sup>43</sup> Despite minor disagreements with Elia's proposals, Soru has expressed continued support and solidarity with him. In several posts, Soru has voiced prayers for Elia's safety and affirmed his respect for Elia's boldness, even amid theological differences, particularly regarding the identity of 'Isa and Jesus.<sup>44</sup>

Unlike Soru's more measured approach, many Christians fully support Elia's statements. One prominent voice is Pastor Franz Baruz, who defended Elia from criticism on TikTok. Baruz rejects the Islamic view that the Bible was altered by early followers. For him, Christians have the right to respond to such claims, and Elia is merely voicing a common view among Christians. Baruz supports the belief that 'Isa al-Masih and Jesus Christ are two different figures. From a Christian perspective, the Bible is complete, preserved by God, and does not require revision. This view is very different from the concept of revelation in Islam. Therefore, he argues that equating 'Isa and Jesus

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<sup>42</sup> Esra Alfred Soru, "Pdt. Esra Soru 'Apakah Nabi ISA Sama Dengan YESUS?'" *Youtube, Esra Alfred Soru*. November 23, 2023, accessed on date December 22, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Prg93Fyrtc4>.

<sup>43</sup> Mell Atock, "Pdt Mell Atock Tidak SEPAHAM Dengan Elia Myron Soal TUHAN YESUS KRISTUS & ISA AL-MASIH!" *Youtube, Pdt Mell Atock*, December 10, 2023, Accessed on date December 22, 2023, [https://www.youtube.com/live/Jyy1Xoew0zA?si=FoPY2qrs9DQ2\\_4iV](https://www.youtube.com/live/Jyy1Xoew0zA?si=FoPY2qrs9DQ2_4iV).

<sup>44</sup> Esra Alfred Soru, "INI PENDAPAT PDT. ESRA SORU TENTANG ELIA MYRON," *Youtube, Rev. Esra Alfred Soru* December 8, 2023), Accessed on date December 22, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yzOM3q6m8eE>.

can be misleading because the two religions have distinct theological frameworks.<sup>45</sup>

In our analysis, we found that explicit narrative support for Elia was relatively limited. Rather than extensive public discourse, most expressions of support appeared in the form of brief comments on his social media posts. These comments typically included encouragement to continue preaching the Bible and prayers for his well-being. The scarcity of more elaborate narratives may be attributed to the minority status of Christians in Indonesia. In this context, Elia is perceived as a courageous figure who dares to publicly express and advocate for Christian beliefs, thereby serving as a symbolic representative for the Christian community in Indonesia.

## 2. *Insider* perspective

In this context, a number of experts, particularly those categorized as *insider-participants as observers*, have voiced their responses to Elia's statement through social media platforms. One of them is Teungku Sakhra, a young Muslim preacher who actively shares Islamic teachings via Tik-Tok. He respects Christians who distinguish between Jesus in Christian teachings and 'Isa in Islam. However, he emphasizes that in Islamic theology, Jesus is understood as Prophet 'Isa, God's messenger who received the Bible to guide the *Ahl al-Kitab*. Sakhra also emphasizes the Islamic belief that the original Bible has been altered by earlier communities, and that the Qur'an was revealed to correct deviations that arose in the traditions of the *Bani Israil*.<sup>46</sup>

To respond to Elia's statements, Sakhra cited a passage from the Qur'an, Surah al-Nisa 4:171, which directly addresses theological excesses among the *Ahl al-*

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<sup>45</sup> Franz Baruz, "Tanggapan Untuk Elia Myron," *TikTok*, accessed on date December 22, 2023, <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSNGepLPo/>.

<sup>46</sup> Teungku Sakhra, "No Title", *TikTok*, accessed on date December 22, 2023, <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSNsQjFC3/>.

*Kitab*. This verse serves as a theological refutation of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and the divinization of Jesus. Sakhra emphasized that, according to Islamic belief, 'Isa was a prophet and messenger, not divine, whose role was to deliver the Bible and guide the *Bani Israil*.

The interpretation provided by contemporary Muslim scholar Wahbah al-Zuhayli reinforces this perspective. He explains that the verse critiques Christian excess in elevating the status of Prophet 'Isa from messenger to deity. This theological transgression, according to al-Zuhayli, extends beyond the figure of 'Isa to include his followers, who are portrayed as claiming superiority over his original message and religious teachings. Al-Zuhayli further asserts that 'Isa al-Masih was commissioned by Allah to call the *Bani Israil* to monotheism, to abandon *shirk* (associating partners with God), to live a pious and ascetic life, and to proclaim the coming of the final prophet, Muhammad SAW, who would seal the line of prophecy.<sup>47</sup>

Another example of an *insider-participant as observer* is the Tik-Tok user Nisrina, who also offered a rebuttal to Elia's arguments. Nisrina acknowledges that there have always been theological differences between Islam and Christianity. From a Muslim perspective, Christian teachings are considered erroneous, just as Christians often judge Islam to be wrong. However, every religion holds its own teachings to be true. Despite understanding these differences, Nisrina strongly rejected Elia's entry into the realm of public policy, especially when he asked the Ministry of Religious Affairs to revise its interpretation of the Qur'an using the Bible. For her, this went beyond the bounds of interfaith dialogue.

She then presented three main arguments. *First*, Muslims believe that the Qur'an perfects the previous scriptures and that some of their teachings have changed.

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<sup>47</sup> Al-Zuhayli, *Tafsir al-Munir fi al-'Aqidah wa al-Shar'iah wa al-Manhaj*, 3: 392.

Therefore, Muslims may quote the Torah or the Bible as long as it does not contradict Islamic beliefs. *Second*, he considered Elia's proposal to be inconsistent. He gave the example that Christians still use the Old Testament, a book revealed to the *Bani Israil* who did not recognize Jesus, to support the teachings of the New Testament. If that is not considered a problem, then the Qur'an should not be criticized for quoting elements of the Bible. *Third*, she rejects the use of verses from the Qur'an to support Christian doctrines such as the Trinity, which is clearly rejected in Islam. Nisrina considers this ironic because Christians themselves do not recognize Muhammad's prophethood or the validity of the Qur'an. Therefore, she considers using the Qur'an to reinforce Christian theology to be contradictory and illogical.<sup>48</sup>

Nisrina's argument is based on the position of the Bible for Muslims. Islam and Christianity are two religions that have the same roots, namely the Abrahamic religions.<sup>49</sup> Thus, the two can be related to each other. However, Nisrina's position as an *insider-participant as observer* still positions the religion she believes in as the main basis for her comments. Nisrina's argument for the permissibility of quoting the Bible in the interpretation of the Qur'an is to provide a new understanding of Elia's argument. Quoting one another in understanding each other's religions is permissible as long as it is within the historical context, not the theological context. There are five categories of use of the Bible in Qur'anic commentaries by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, namely to explain vocabulary, repeat stories, add explanations to stories, refute Christian

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<sup>48</sup> Nisrina Nisrina, "Yuk Move On Dari Masalah Ini," *TikTok*, accessed on date December 22, 2023, <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSNsxGpVn/>.

<sup>49</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Mac Millan Publishing Company, 1987), 13.

teachings, and to hint at the arrival of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>50</sup>

Numerous counter-narratives and warnings from Muslims have been directed at Elia in response to his statements. The rebuttals and warnings from *insiders* directed at Elia reveal a range of perspectives, but the general consensus among Muslims is that Elia should refrain from interfering in Islamic affairs, particularly in requesting the Ministry of Religious Affairs to reform the interpretation of the Qur'an. Many Muslims were not only angered but deeply hurt by Elia's open letter. However, beneath this backlash, the core message of these responses emphasizes the importance of preserving religious diversity and fostering tolerance among different communities. It underscores the need for a deeper understanding of each other's faiths, without resorting to the view that the teachings of other religions are inherently wrong.

### **Analysis of Elia Myron's Open Letter: Tolerance or Intolerance?**

On his TikTok account, Elia continues to upload videos about Christianity, responding to criticism and providing explanations from a Christian perspective. However, his views have been challenged and refuted by a number of former Christians who have now converted to Islam. One of them is former pastor Dantje Mumek, who, through his YouTube channel, asserts that Islam is the final religion and the most pleasing to Allah. Mumek argues that, upon comparison of the Qur'an and the Bible, it is clear that the Qur'an revealed to the Prophet Muhammad completes

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<sup>50</sup> Muhammad Ibnu al-Fajri, "Penggunaan Bibel Dalam Kitab al-Qur'an Dan Tafsirnya Karya Kementerian Agama," (Thesis UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2024), 90-91.

previous scriptures, including the Bible, thereby affirming the truth of Islamic teachings.<sup>51</sup>

Dantje Mumek's view aligns with the theological basis of Islam, as articulated in the Qur'an, Surah Ali Imran 3:19, which affirms that the true religion in the sight of Allah is Islam. Surah al-Ma'idah 5:3, which states that Islam is the final revelation and has been perfected. Therefore, Islam believes that there will be no more revelations or messengers after the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>52</sup> In this context, all previous prophets, including Moses and Jesus in the Christian tradition, are recognized as having brought true teachings, but these teachings were specific to their respective peoples and times. However, Islam is universal and has been preserved in its original form, according to Islamic belief.<sup>53</sup>

Another former Christian convert, Dondy Tan, rejected Elia Myron's argument, pointing out fundamental differences between the Qur'an and the Bible. According to him, these two holy books do have different teachings and cannot be equated theologically. Dondy highlights a number of stories in the Bible, such as Noah getting drunk, Aaron making a golden calf, David committing adultery, Solomon being considered a polytheist, Job protesting against God, and Lot impregnating his daughters, which are very different from the depictions of the prophets in the Qur'an. Therefore, he concluded that these striking

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<sup>51</sup> Dantje Mumek, "Inilah Alasan Dantje Mumek Mualaf," *Youtube, Dantje Mumek* October 21, 2022, accessed on date December 23, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaAMBBalhv4>.

<sup>52</sup> Abu Ja'far bin Muhammad Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ay fi al-Tafsir al-Qur'an* (Kaheerah: Dar al-Hijr, 2001), 8: 84-85.

<sup>53</sup> John M Koller, "From the Prophet to the Present: An Historical Approach to Understanding Islam," *The Journal of Comparative Asian Development* 3(1) (2004): 29-50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15339114.2004.9678391>.

differences actually show that the Qur'an is a divine revelation that has been preserved from human alteration.<sup>54</sup>

Although many Christians, as *outsiders*, support Elia's move, the majority of Muslims, as *insiders*, reject it. His open letter to the Ministry of Religious Affairs calling for reform of the interpretation of the Qur'an has sparked a major controversy and gone viral in Indonesia because it directly touches on the theological beliefs of Muslims and the interpretive authority of state religious institutions. The Ministry of Religious Affairs itself plays an important role in regulating religious life and maintaining harmony among religious communities.<sup>55</sup> Through its *Religious Moderation* program, the Ministry emphasizes four principles, namely national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and acceptance of local culture, as guidelines for strengthening unity and preventing radicalism amid religious diversity.<sup>56</sup>

Elia's stance challenges Islamic teachings by requesting a revision of the interpretation of the Qur'an, Surah al-A'raf 7:157, which refers to the Bible's mention of the coming of the Prophet Muhammad. This can be understood as an act of intolerance, even though he himself claims that this step is a form of religious tolerance. Elia seems to have overgeneralized his argument based on a single verse, and this narrow focus has sparked controversy and numerous rebuttals. Therefore, his decision to send an open letter to the Ministry of Religious Affairs can hardly be considered an effort to build tolerance. This is in accordance with the principle stated in the Qur'an, Surah

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<sup>54</sup> Dondy Tan, "Menuduh Isi Alquran Jiplak Bible?" *Youtube, Nabila Sani*, accessed on date December 25, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/srEhPvkTMuw>.

<sup>55</sup> Hadi Pajariato, Imam Pribadi, and Puspa Sari, "Tolerance between Religions through the Role of Local Wisdom and Religious Moderation," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 78(4) (2022), 1-8, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i4.7043>.

<sup>56</sup> Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019), 29.

al-Kafirun 109:6: "*For you your religion and for me my religion.*"

According to al-Qurtubi, this verse is addressed to non-Muslims who claim that they also worship Allah, but this claim is invalid because their beliefs are not based on pure monotheism and are still mixed with elements of polytheism. Thus, the form of worship in Islam has a theological character that is fundamentally different from the worship of other religions, so that the two cannot be united or compromised.<sup>57</sup> This view is in line with Hamka's explanation, which emphasizes that attempts to reconcile tawhid and shirk actually demonstrate the dominance of shirk, because the union of the two will eliminate the purity of tawhid itself.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, M. Quraish Shihab emphasized that this verse confirms that religious teachings, both fundamental and detailed, cannot be united within a person who sincerely believes in their religion.<sup>59</sup>

Interestingly, this Islamic view is also implicitly acknowledged in the Bible. In John 4:22, Jesus emphasizes the theological difference between the Samaritans and the Jews: "*you worship what you do not know; we worship what we know,*" which shows recognition of irreconcilable differences in faith.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, Luke 9:49-50 shows that Jesus did not demand the imposition of beliefs, but rather gave space for others to practice their beliefs as long as they were not hostile.<sup>61</sup> Paul in Romans 14:5 emphasizes that

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<sup>57</sup> Abu 'Abdullah Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Ansari al-Qurtubi, *al-Jami' li Ahkam al-Qur'an* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Shafa, 2005), 22: 537.

<sup>58</sup> Amrullah, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, 10: 8133.

<sup>59</sup> Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, 15: 574.

<sup>60</sup> John 4:22: "*You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews*", Alkitab.

<sup>61</sup> Luke 9:49-50: "*Master,*" said John, "*we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us. Do not stop him,*" Jesus said, "*for whoever is not against you is for you*", Alkitab.

everyone must hold fast to their beliefs.<sup>62</sup> In fact, Romans 12:18 affirms that peaceful coexistence with others must be pursued without negating fundamental differences in belief.<sup>63</sup> Thus, both in Islam and Christianity, there is a principle that theological differences cannot be forcibly unified, but must be accompanied by an attitude of peace, respect, and without coercion of belief.

Based on this understanding, both Islam and Christianity emphasize the importance of each religious community adhering firmly to their respective beliefs. The fundamental differences and details of the teachings of the two religions cannot be reconciled, so followers of each religion should not accept teachings that contradict their beliefs. In the context of the controversy over the correction of interpretation proposed by Elia Myron, the more appropriate course of action is to refrain from interfering with the details of Islamic teachings and interpretations of the Qur'an. The verses of the Qur'an that discuss the coming of the Prophet Muhammad after the Prophet 'Isa are an integral part of Islamic beliefs. Therefore, Elia does not need to push for a revision of this interpretation, as it is outside the realm of Christian beliefs. Elia's actions have instead sparked tension and disrupted interfaith harmony in Indonesia, especially through his statements that went viral on TikTok and other social media.

## Conclusion

From the brief analysis above, this article concludes that Elia Myron's open letter to the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, in which he calls for a reform of the interpretation of the Qur'an, can be viewed from Kim Knott's *insider-outsider* perspective as a divisive act within

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<sup>62</sup> Romans 14:5: "One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind," Alkitab.

<sup>63</sup> Romans 12:18: "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone," Alkitab.

Indonesia's religious communities. While Elia enjoys the support of the majority of Christians (*outsiders*) and justifies his request for the Ministry to revise the interpretation of the Qur'an, Surah al-A'raf 7:157, as an act of tolerance, his actions have actually resulted in intolerance that risks damaging the harmony between Muslims and Christians. From an *insider's* perspective, Elia is seen as overstepping by involving himself in Islamic teachings and neglecting one of the key indicators of religious moderation promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs: tolerance. Some of the posts Elia has shared on his Tik-Tok and other social media platforms have, indirectly, fueled intolerance and have the potential to undermine inter-religious harmony, particularly between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia.

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