



Bridging Sacred Traditions: Seyyed Hossein Nasr's Hermeneutics and the Application of Biblical References in "The Study Quran"

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Abstract

The application of biblical references in the field of interpretation is not a new phenomenon, but it does not make it a common practice. This study examines Seyyed Hossein Nasr's construct of thought in *The Study Quran* (TSQ) in the application of the Bible as a reference for interpretation. This application did not arise from a vacuum, but was followed by certain constructive factors that led to the application of biblical references in the framework of *The Study Quran*. This study uses a qualitative-philosophical method by utilizing John Hick's Religious Inclusivism-Religious approach from John Hick (ultimate reality, inclusivism paradigm, and theocentric model) to highlight the theological dimension, as well as the Philosophical Hermeneutics from Hans-George Gadamer (historical influence, pre-understanding, and assimilation of horizons) in revealing the socio-historical dimension of Seyyed Hossein Nasr. The results of the study show that Seyyed Hossein Nasr assesses the Bible as a text with complex historical value, and that the involvement of the Bible in the realm of interpretation has the purpose of expanding the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an. Given the issue of distortion, this work emphasizes the aspect of distortion of meaning and interpretation rather than distortion of the text. The view of distortion indirectly imposes limitations by placing the Bible as a historical text limited to the functions of historical contextualization and intertextual analysis. In the theological dimension, Seyyed Hossein Nasr's position is inclusive, while in the hermeneutical-philosophical perspective, it shows a hermeneutic situation with intellectual traces and contemporary dynamics, including the 9/11 phenomenon that gave rise to Islamophobia in New York. Given the limitations of the Eastern school in assessing the application of the Bible as presented and the dynamics of the Western school, which is open to cross-traditional references, supported by the 9/11 phenomenon, this shows an effort to bridge two different traditions in the realm of interpretation.

Contribution: This study theoretically contributes by integrating John Hick's religious inclusivism and Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics to construct an interreligious interpretive framework that explains Seyyed Hossein Nasr's inclusive use of biblical references in *The Study Quran*.

Keywords: Bibel Referential, The Study Quran, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Inclusivism-Religious, Hermeneutics-Philosophical.

Abstrak

Pengaplikasian referensial Bibel dalam ranah tafsir bukanlah fenomena baru, namun tidak menjadikannya praktik lazim. Penelitian ini mengkaji konstruk pemikiran Seyyed Hossein Nasr dalam *The Study Quran* dalam pengaplikasian Bibel sebagai referensi tafsir. Pengaplikasian tersebut tidak lahir dari kehampaan, namun diikuti oleh faktor-faktor konstrukur tertentu yang menjadi sebab pengaplikasian referensial Bibel dalam kerangka tafsir *The Study Quran*. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif-filosofis dengan memanfaatkan





Inklusivisme-Religius dari John Hick (*ultimate reality*, paradigma inklusivisme, dan *theocentric model*) untuk menyoroti dimensi teologis, serta Hermeneutika-Filosofis dari Hans-George Gadamer (keterpengaruh sejarah, pra-pemahaman, dan asimilasi horizon) dalam mengungkap dimensi sosio-historis Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Seyyed Hossein Nasr menilai Bibel sebagai teks dengan nilai historis yang kompleks, keterlibatan Bibel dalam ranah tafsir tersebut memiliki tujuan memperluas makna ayat al-Qur'ān. Mengingat isu distorsi yang ada, karya ini menekankan pada aspek distorsi makna dan penafsiran dari pada distorsi teks. Pandangan distorsi secara tidak langsung memuat batasan dengan menempatkan Bibel sebagai teks historis yang terbatas pada fungsi kontekstualisasi historis dan analisis intertekstual. Dalam dimensi teologis posisi Seyyed Hossein Nasr sebagai sikap inklusif, sementara dalam perspektif hermeneutika-filosofis menunjukkan situasi hermeneutik dengan jejak intelektual, serta dinamika kontemporer termasuk fenomena 9/11 yang melahirkan paham Islamophobia di New York. Mengingat batasan mazhab timur dalam menilai pengaplikasian Bibel yang disajikan serta dinamika mazhab Barat yang terbuka akan referensi lintas tradisi didukung dengan fenomena 9/11 yang terjadi menunjukkan upaya dalam menjembatani dua tradisi yang berbeda dalam ranah tafsir.

Kontribusi: Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi teoretis dengan mengintegrasikan inklusivisme agama John Hick dan hermeneutika filosofis Gadamer untuk membangun kerangka tafsir antaragama yang menjelaskan penggunaan inklusif referensi biblis oleh Seyyed Hossein Nasr dalam *The Study Quran*.

Kata Kunci: Referensial Bibel, *The Study Quran*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Inklusivisme-Religius, Hermeneutika-Filosofis.

Introduction

Biblical referential practice in exegetical relations is not a new practice,¹ but it does not make it common to be accepted by the general public. The continuous period has spawned a variety of exegetical works/scholarly studies with cross-studies of other Abrahamic traditions including between the Quran and the Bibel that have been applied in several interpretations. Behind the great surge given to the variety of works of interpretation with this form of application, is the fact that the *mufasssirs* are bound by certain structural factors. This is influenced by the scientific background and environment, as well as the construction of the text in different periods in each *mufasssir*, considering the birth of a text absolutely has a relationship with other (pre-understanding) texts.² Given that tafsir contains theological elements so that cross-studies between sacred texts in the tradition of tafsir become a hot topic, but the intersection gave birth to polemical attitudes and fears of theological clashes.³ There are aspects of controversy in its application, broadly speaking, the problem is the

¹ The beginning of Bibel's involvement in the field of interpretation is recorded as starting in the first and second centuries of the Hijri calendar. See, Abu Jamin Rohan, *Pembicaraan Di Sekitaran Bible Dan Qur'an Dalam Segi Isi Dan Riwayat Penulisannya* (PT Bulan Bintang, 1984), 12–13.

² Mevlüde Zengin, *An Introduction to Intertextuality as a Literary Theory: Definitions, Axioms and the Originators*, 2016, no. 50 (2016): 302, <https://doi.org/10.5505/pausbed.2016.96729>.

³ In the Judeo-Christian tradition, religious polemics in the Bible have been written about extensively. Some scholars argue that the nature of scripture is highly polemical. The term "polemical" according to Mun'im Sirry means that scriptural texts portray other religions negatively, which includes criticism of other religious communities, either explicitly or implicitly. See, Mun'im Sirry, *Polemik Kitab Suci: Tafsir Reformasi Atas Kritik al-Qur'an Terhadap Agama Lain* (PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2013), xviii–xix.





autonomous authority of the Quran as a revelation text in practice is categorized as having the same hierarchical level as other sacred texts and analyzed with a historical-critical approach.⁴

Objectively, the Biblical referential practice in interpretive relations is not born from a vacuum, there are triggering factors in its application both in intellectual traces and environmental factors, one of the works that make such applications in this contemporary era, namely *The Study Quran: a New Translation and Commentary* by Seyyed Hosein Nasr and his team, namely Caner K. Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph E. B. Lumbard, and Mohammed Rustom (hereinafter referred to by the initials TSQ). TSQ presents a work that was historically born from a request from HarperOne publishers to Seyyed Hossein Nasr to realize the monumental project. Externally there are also various pressures and demands, with a variety of problems from the social, political, and intellectual aspects that occur in the Western world. Starting with the demand for a more comprehensive and trustworthy translation due to the unfamiliar status of the Islamic context in the West, as well as the academic need to understand the Quran in an interdisciplinary manner, and the emergence of negative stereotypes of Islam in the post-9/11 era that gave birth to Islamophobic ideals in New York. These various problems were the forerunners of TSQ's work as a response to the various demands and pressures in a multicultural and secular society, which made him a bridge between two contradictory schools.

Studies related to the application of the Bible as a dominant reference for interpretation look at diverse subjects but share the same intertextual perspective, such as *First*, Fathiya Hanifa⁵, Nur Anis Rochmawati⁶, Azka Fazaka Rif'ah⁷, and Sikha Amalia⁸. In the context of TSQ, which applies the Bible as a reference—including in examining the thought construct of Seyyed Hossein Nasr—it is predominantly viewed from certain perspectives that are involved in the struggle between spirituality and science, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr has a big name in this discipline. *Second*, studies examining the thought construct of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, such as Farkhan Fuady⁹, Nurul Khorina

⁴ Abraham Geiger is considered the first scholar to apply a critical historical approach to the Quran, because in his dissertation entitled *Muhammed aus den Judentum aufgenommen*, he determined that the influence of the Quran on Judaism in several ways, namely verses related to doctrine and faith; stories contained in the Quran; views on life; and verses of legal regulations, are part of the tradition that Muhammad consciously plagiarized. See, Ibn Warraq, *The Origins of Koran* (Prometheus Books, 1998), 170.

⁵ Fathiya Hanifa, "Application of Bible in Qur'an Interpretation: An Intertextual Analysis in the Tafsir Book by Zainuddin Hamidy and Fachruddin Hs," *Cordoba Journal of Islamic Thought* 1, no. 1 (2025), <https://cjit.uicordoba.ac.id/index.php/cjit/article/view/10>.

⁶ Nur Anis Rochmawati, "Cross-Reference Terhadap Bibel Dalam The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary Karya Abdullah Yusuf Ali," *Nun: Jurnal Studi Alquran Dan Tafsir Di Nusantara* 7, no. 2 (2021): 329–48, <https://doi.org/10.32495/nun.v7i2.303>.

⁷ M. Azka Fazaka Rif'ah, "Alkitab Sebagai Sumber Tafsir: Ibrahim bin 'Umar al-Biqai dan Tafsir Perintah Penyembelihan Anak Ibrahim dalam Q.S. al-Saffat [37]: 99-113" (masters, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2023), <https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/64060/>.

⁸ Sikha Amalia Sandia Pitaloka, "Bibel Sebagai Sumber Tafsir: Telaah Tafsir The Message of The Quran" (masters, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2023), <https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/58304/>.

⁹ Farkhan Fuady, "Nilai Etika Dalam Seni Islam: Studi Pemikiran Seyyed Hossein Nasr," *Jurnal Peradaban* 2, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.51353/jpb.v2i2.628>.





Seci Vella¹⁰, Titin Nurhidayati¹¹, and Abduh Muhammad¹². *Third*, studies by making TSQ as the object of study, such as Khumaerah Luluk¹³, Zikri Riza¹⁴, Mukhammad Hubbab Nauval¹⁵, and Sri Redjeki¹⁶. Studies that look at the construct of Seyyed Hossein Nasr's thoughts related to Biblical reference tafsir—especially the work of TSQ—are still minimal in the view of scholars. The presence of atomistically analyzing the constructs of the *mufasssir*'s thoughts in applying the Bibel as a reference can be a form of sensitivity to a perspective that the involvement of the Bibel in exegetical relations has special missions in certain contexts, where this makes it a dialogical tool in introducing the Quran.

The purpose of this study is to fill the gap in the literature mentioned above, namely that in applying the Bible as a reference for interpretation by exegetes, there is certainly a specific hermeneutical situation that necessitates its application. This is done for specific missions in certain contexts, where it becomes a means of dialogue in introducing the Qur'an. There are at least three questions raised. First, how does the Bible contribute to *The Study Quran*? Second, how does Seyyed Hossein Nasr's theological construct underlie the application of biblical references? Third, how does Seyyed Hossein Nasr's socio-historical background shape his cross-scriptural interpretation in *The Study Quran*? These three questions are important to reveal how the application of biblical references arises from certain constructive factors. This study is based on the argument that the practice of intertextual study between scriptures does not arise from a vacuum, but contains certain constructive factors that contribute to its realization. This law applies to TSQ, where the decision to use the Bible as a reference for interpretation is not an incidental step, but is rooted in its understanding, followed by epistemological tensions in the contemporary Islamic world—especially in the West—and this makes TSQ a response to that context. As a result of this application, it has an impact in that it not

¹⁰ Nurul Khorina Seci Vella and Derry Ahmad Rizal, "Ekoteologi Dalam Pemikiran Seyyed Hossein Nasr Dan Relasi Agama-Masyarakat," *Al-I'timad: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Pengembangan Masyarakat Islam* 2, no. 2 (2024): 2, <https://doi.org/10.35878/alitimad.v2i2.1320>.

¹¹ Titin Nurhidayati, "Pemikiran Seyyed Hossein Nasr: Konsep Keindahan Dan Seni Islami Dalam Dunia Pendidikan Islam," *FALASIFA : Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 10, no. 1 (2019): 27–44, <https://doi.org/10.36835/falasifa.v10i1.150>.

¹² Abduh Muhammad and Kerwanto, "Relevansi Pemikiran Seyyed Hossein Nasr Tentang Integrasi Islam Dan Sains Terhadap Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia," *EDUMULYA: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 1, no. 2 (2023): 2, <https://doi.org/10.59166/edumulya.v1i2.105>.

¹³ Khumaerah Luluk, "Hermeneutika Tradisional Sayyed Hossein Nasr Dalam The Study Quran A New Translation and Commentary" (other, IAIN Salatiga, 2019), <http://e-repository.perpus.iainsalatiga.ac.id/>.

¹⁴ Zikri Riza, "Corak Tafsir Esoterik dalam The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary (2015) Karya Seyyed Hossein Nasr et.al." (masterThesis, Pascasarjana UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2022), <https://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/handle/123456789/60081>.

¹⁵ M. Hubbab Nauval, "Neo-Tradisionalisme Sayyed Hossein Nasr dan Implikasinya Terhadap Penafsiran Ayat-ayat Ethico-Legal (Studi atas Buku The Study Quran A New Translation and Commentary)" (skripsi, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2021), <https://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/45317/>.

¹⁶ Sri Redjeki, "Konsep Estetika Tauhid Pada Arsitektur Islam (Studi Pemikiran Seyyed Hossein Nasr Dalam Tafsir The Study Quran: A New Translation And Commentary)" (masters, Institut PTIQ Jakarta, 2022), <https://repository.ptiq.ac.id/id/eprint/633/>.





only offers a dialogical understanding across traditions, but also reconstructs the relationship between communities that has long been considered part of the external fence of orthodoxy.

This research is categorized as a type of *library research*, which is research that focuses on tracing written sources¹⁷ in accordance with the theme under study. This study's data sources are divided into two categories: primary data, which refers to *The Study Qur'an: a New Translation and Commentary* by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and his team, with the aim of revealing the thought constructs of the mufasssir—especially Seyyed Hossein Nasr—which led to the use of the Bible as a reference in interpreting the Qur'an. Secondary data will be sourced from written materials such as books, journals, and research reports related to the theme. Data collection and processing in this study will be qualitative-philosophical, combining John Hick's theory of Religious Inclusivism (ultimate reality, the inclusivism paradigm, and the theocentric model) in examining the theological foundations of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, which emphasize the unity of the sources of revelation and the interconnectedness of religious traditions, and Hans-George Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics theory (the influence of history, pre-understanding, and assimilation of horizons) in exploring the process of understanding formed through dialogue between sacred texts. This approach not only contains Seyyed Hossein Nasr's theological position, but also contains a process of horizon fusion that gives birth to dialogical interpretations.

Identity of Seyyed Hossein Nasr

Seyyed Hossein Nasr was born in Tehran, Iran, on April 7, 1933. His family has a lineage of renowned scholars, including his maternal great-grandfather, Faḍ Allah an-Nūri, who was one of the leading scholars who played an important role during the constitutional revolution of 1906. Seyyed Hossein Nasr's father, Seyyed Valiallah Nasr, was a doctor and an expert in Persian language and philosophy¹⁸. Seyyed Hossein Nasr's mother was Mulla Seyyed Muhammad Taqi Poshmashhad who was a prominent Sufi in Khasan and fluent in classical Persian poetry¹⁹. Seyyed Hossein Nasr's father was the first teacher to teach religious and cultural values and instill sensitivity to Iran's political situation. His father's upbringing led Seyyed Hossein Nasr to study Persian verse and

¹⁷ Mestika Zed, *Library Research Methods*

¹⁸ Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Ramin Jahanbegloo, *In Search of The Sacred: A Conversation with Seyyed Hossein Nasr on His Life and Thought* (Praeger, 2010), 1–2.

¹⁹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Pergulatan Sains Dan Spiritualitas Menuju Paradigma Kosmologi Alternatif*. Terjemah Achmad Maimun (IRCiSoD, 2015), 44.





commandments such as the comprehensive verses of Sa'di and Hafiz, and to learn a great deal about philosophy²⁰.

In his formal education, Seyyed Hossein Nasr attended elementary school in Tehran with a standard Persian curriculum studying traditionalist sciences, such as philosophy, kalam, fiqh, and Sufism, at the same time as his father sent him to an educational institution in Qum to study with prominent scholars such as Thabataba'i to learn the disciplines of philosophy, Sufism, and theology as well as memorizing the Quran and Classical Persian art²¹. At the age of 12 Seyyed Hossein Nasr continued his secondary schooling by going to America in the fall of 1945 post WWII. He attended The Peddie School in the town of Highstown, New Jersey, where he spent four years studying science, English, American history, and Western culture and Christianity. In 1950, Seyyed Hossein Nasr continued his studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the United States in the fields of physics and theoretical mathematics, and graduated in 1954 with excellent results and a B.Sc. (*Bachelor of Science*) degree. His scientific journey continued at Harvard University for a doctoral thesis program with geography and geophysics specialists in addition to researching paleontology, and graduated in 1956 with an M.Sc. degree, and two years later in 1958 completed his doctoral education with a Ph.D. degree supported by a dissertation entitled *Conception of Nature in Islamic Thought and Methods Used for Its Study by the Ikhwân al-Safa", al-Biruni and Ibn Sina*, published by Harvard University in 1964 with the title *Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*²².

After completing his doctoral program in 1958, Seyyed Hossein Nasr returned to Iran and became an Extraordinary Professor in 1962-1965 at the University of Tehran. At the same university Seyyed Hossein Nasr served as dean and taught Islamic philosophy and history of science at the Faculty of Letters, University of Tehran. In 1970 Seyyed Hossein Nasr served as Vice-Chancellor, and two years later (1972-1979) was appointed Rector of Arya-Mehr University of Technology, Tehran. In the same year, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and his family moved to America and worked as academics at several universities, such as the University of Utah, and Temple University. Seyyed Hossein Nasr also taught at George Washington University and has been a professor of Islamic studies at the university until now²³.

²⁰ Aan Rumana, *Seyyed Hossein Nasr* (Dian Rakyat, 2013), 13.

²¹ Hossein Nasr, *Pergulatan Sains Dan Spiritualitas Menuju Paradigma Kosmologi Alternatif*. Terjemah Achmad Maimun, 45.

²² Hery Sucipto, *Ensiklopedi Tokoh Islam: Dari Abu Bakr Sampai Nasr Dan Qardhawî* (Mizan, 2003), 323.

²³ Hossein Nasr and Jahanbegloo, *In Search of The Sacred: A Conversation with Seyyed Hossein Nasr on His Life and Thought*, 135–38.





These intellectual influences became the seeds of Seyyed Hosein Nasr's personal construct and mindset, who studied science and philosophy directly from traditional teachers and sheikhs, such as Sayyid Muhammad Kazim 'Assar, Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i, and Sayyid Abu al-Hasan Qazwini, Mahdi Ilahi Qumsha'i and Jawad Muslih, as well as Henry Corbin²⁴. Influenced by environmental factors during his education in America, Seyyed Hossein Nasr's mindset became more pluralistic in assessing other traditions. This is evidenced by his early education at The Peddie School, New Jersey, where he studied Christianity, making Seyyed Hossein Nasr quite familiar with Christian-Jewish literature and comparative religious studies. Seyyed Hossein Nasr's pluralistic views are expressed in his works such as *The Garden of Truth*²⁵ and *Religion and the Order of Nature*²⁶. These intellectual influences became the seeds of Seyyed Hosein Nasr's personal construct and mindset, who studied science and philosophy directly from traditional teachers and sheikhs, such as Sayyid Muhammad Kazim 'Assar, Muhammad Husayn al-Tabataba'i, and Sayyid Abu al-Hasan Qazwini, Mahdi Ilahi Qumsha'i and Jawad Muslih, as well as Henry Corbin. Supported by environmental factors during his education in America, Seyyed Hossein Nasr's mindset became more pluralistic in assessing other traditions. This is evidenced by his early education at The Peddie School, New Jersey, where he studied Christianity, making Seyyed Hossein Nasr quite familiar with Christian-Jewish literature and comparative religious studies. Seyyed Hossein Nasr's pluralistic views are expressed in his works such as *The Garden of Truth* and *Religion and the Order of Nature*, which discuss the essential similarities between Christian and Jewish spirituality and Islam, highlighting the universal values of sacred traditions and returning to the metaphysical roots that connect the three religions. Seyyed Hossein Nasr also emphasizes the importance of returning to the original sources and authentic teachings of each tradition in interfaith dialogue. Seyyed Hossein Nasr's multidisciplinary approach to philosophy, science, Sufism, and pluralism has made him better known as a contemporary Muslim philosopher and an important figure in perennial philosophy.

Many other works were produced as a form of expressing his thoughts, including his latest work in the discipline of translation and interpretation of the Qur'an (*The Study Quran: a New Translation and Commentary*) as editor-in-chief. Among his phenomenal works are:

²⁴ Hossein Nasr, *Pergulatan Sains Dan Spiritualitas Menuju Paradigma Kosmologi Alternatif*. Terjemah Achmad Maimun, 51.

²⁵ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition* (HarperOne, 2008), 1–272.

²⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature* (Oxford University Press, 1996), 1–320.





1. 1958, *Conception of Nature in Islamic Thought and Methods Used for Its Study by the Ikhwân al-Safa', al-Biruni and Ibn Sina* (dissertation series published by Harvard University with the latest title *Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*)²⁷.
2. In 1964, *Three Muslim Sages* and has been translated into Indonesian by Achmad Maimun Syamsuddin with the title *Tiga Mazhab Utama Filsafat Islam*²⁸.
3. 1966, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* and has been translated into Indonesian by Abdurrahman Wahid and Hasyim Wahid with the title *Islam antara Cinta dan Fakta*²⁹.
4. In 1968, *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* and has been translated into Indonesian by Ali Noer Zaman with the title *Antara Tuhan, Manusia dan Alam: Jembatan Filosofis dan Religius Menuju Puncak Spiritual*³⁰.
5. 1980, *Living Sufism* and has been translated into Indonesian by Abdul Hadi under the title *Tasawuf Dulu dan Sekarang*³¹.
6. In 1987, *Traditional Islam in the Modern World* and has been translated into Indonesian by Hakim Luqman with the title *Islam Tradisi di Tengah Kancah Modern*³².
7. 1987, *Islamic Art and Spirituality* and has been translated into Indonesian by Sutejo with the title *Spiritualitas dan Seni Islam*³³.

²⁷ This is a doctoral dissertation in the form of research on the concept of traditionalist cosmology related to metaphysics, by looking at the thoughts of Ikhwân al-Safa', al-Biruni and Ibn Sina. See, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, Revised Edition (State University of New York Press, 1993).

²⁸ Contains the thoughts of three main classical Muslim figures related to Islamic philosophy, including Ibn Sina, Suhrawardi, and Ibn 'Arabi. These three figures are considered as the foundation in the discipline of Islamic philosophy. See, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Tiga Mazhab Utama Filsafat Islam. Terjemah Achmad Maimun Syamsuddin* (IRCiSoD, 2020), 15.

²⁹ Contains a concise explanation of Islam comprehensively and the process of understanding it. It looks at the sources of Islamic law in terms of the Quran and Hadeeth, the history of the development of Islam in the last fourteen centuries, and depicts the dimensions of Muslim thought and the limitations of living through the institution of religious law in the search for peace of mind. See, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam Antara Cita Dan Fakta. Terjemah Abdurrahman Wahid Dan Hasyim Wahid* (IRCiSoD, 2001), 21.

³⁰ Contains an explanation related to the collapse of understanding of the value of spirituality which is a bridge between God, humans, and the universe. This effect occurs with the presence of technology and science which is a factor in the loss of philosophical and religious values from humans in maintaining the dialectic between humans, God, and nature. See, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Antara Tuhan, Manusia Dan Alam. Terjemah Ali Noer Zaman* (IRCiSoD, 2003), 21.

³¹ Contains facts about the tendency of Western society to be integrated with false worldly pleasures. The introduction of the value of Sufism by showing the value of Islamic spirituality—according to Seyyed Hossein Nasr—can be the key to human liberation from the prison of pluralism—as happened in the West—towards a nature that is fitrah. See, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Tasawuf Dulu Dan Sekarang. Terjemah Abdul Hadi* (Pustaka Firdaus, 1994), 1–16.

³² Contains the interaction of traditional Islam with modernity. Where there are positive and negative influences on the encounter, as well as the West's assessment of the Islamic world. According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the conflict of modernity by separating science and religion is a perspective that contradicts the concept of tawhid which teaches unity and balance in all aspects of life. See, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam Tradisi Di Tengah Kancah Dunia Modern. Terjemah Hakim Luqman* (Penerbit Pustaka, 1994).

³³ Addresses the lack of appeal of Islamic art in Western aesthetic discourse. Seyyed Hossein Nasr sees the special aspects of Islamic art in the perspective of Islamic spirituality related to the principle of revelation, and the introduction of calligraphic art is a visualization of the spiritual reality contained in Islamic revelation. See, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Spiritualitas Dan Seni Islam. Terjemah Sutejo* (Mizan, 1994), 29.





8. 1994, *A Young Muslim's Guide to the Modern World* and has been translated into Indonesian by Hasti Tarekat with the title *Menjelajah Dunia Modern: Bimbingan untuk Kaum Muda Muslim*³⁴.

Seyyed Hossein's other works are *Muhammad: Man of God* (1988), *Knowledge and the Sacred* (1989), *Sufi Essays* (1991), *The Need for Sacred Science* (1993), *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (1993), *Islamic Science: An Illustrated Study* (1995), *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia* (1996), *Religion and the Order of Nature* (1996), *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (1997), *Sadr al-Din Shirazi* (1997), *Science and Civilization in Islam* (1997), *Poems of the Way* (1999), *Islamic Life and Thought* (2001), *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man* (2002), *Islam: Religion, History, and Civilization* (2003), *The Heart of Islam* (2004), *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present* (2006), *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr* (2007; ed. W. Chittick), *Islam, Science, Muslims, and Technology* (2007), *The Pilgrimage of Life and the Wisdom of Rumi* (2007), *The Garden of Truth* (2008).³⁵

The Study Quran: a New Translation and Commentary

The Study Quran (TSQ) has a historical record of writing that began in 2006 at exactly nine years pre-publication. The publisher, HarperOne (formerly HarperSanFrancisco) began planning the project by approaching Seyyed Hossein Nasr to lead the writing and research of TSQ project as the *chief editor*, a special project to complement his previous work, *The Harper Collins Study Bible*. This monumental project would not have been realized if Seyyed Hossein Nasr had not agreed to take part in the project, although there was a rejection, Seyyed Hossein Nasr finally accepted the offer as a form of responsibility from God to him. Examples of references other than books are papers in academic³⁶.

In the continuity of writing this monumental project, Seyyed Hossein Nasr formed a team by selecting Muslim scholars who have similarities in the value of intellectual vision, the value of spirituality, and the assessment of traditionality. The Muslim scholars selected for the project, with Seyyed Hossein Nasr as *editor-in-chief*, included three *general editors* including Caner Karacay Dagli³⁷,

³⁴ Contains an attempt to present the messages in Islam as an attractive value for young people, with the aim of protecting against the influence of materialism in modern world thought. See, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Menjelajah Dunia Modern: Bimbingan Untuk Kaum Muda Modern*. Terjemah Hasti Tarekat (Mizan, 1995), 9.

³⁵ Hossein Nasr and Jahanbegloo, *In Search of The Sacred: A Conversation with Seyyed Hossein Nasr on His Life and Thought*, ii.

³⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al., *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (Harper One, 2015), xl.

³⁷ Caner Karacay Dagli is an Islamic scholar specializing in Sufism, Islamic philosophy, interfaith dialogue, and Quranic studies of Circassian-Turkish descent, and was born in the United States. See, Data obtained from Caner K. Dagli's curriculum vitae. See, Data diperoleh dari curriculum vitae Caner K. Dagli. Lihat, "Caner K Dagli | College of the Holy Cross - Academia.Edu," accessed January 24, 2025, <https://holycross.academia.edu/Dagli/CurriculumVitae>.





Maria Massi Dakake³⁸, Joseph Edward Barbour Lumbard³⁹, and *the assistant editor*, Mohammed Rustom⁴⁰. The aim of the project is to present a comprehensive reading and understanding of the Quran presented in English that is *relatable* and accessible to the general public, especially to Muslims and non-Muslims as consumers. On the other hand, this work also responds to academic needs, both for researchers and academics who want to understand the Quran in a multidisciplinary manner.⁴¹

TSQ has a *tahlili* method of interpretation because each verse of the Quran has an interpretation with a comprehensive explanation, and is arranged based on *tartib mushafi* where the interpretation begins in accordance with the order of the *utsmani Mushaf* from QS. al-Fātiḥah - QS. an-Nās. Furthermore, TSQ tends to ignore conjectural and fantastical interpretations, especially those that cannot be proven in traditional tafsir literature⁴². On the other hand, the form of interpretation presented tends to be subjective, due to the characteristic of its reference by quoting traditionalist books of interpretation as an excuse in strengthening TSQ's interpretive arguments and another tendency to also quote the Bibel as a reference, thus creating confusion in reasoning the efforts made by TSQ.

The writing of TSQ has a distinctive synthesis-traditionalist style, as it has a multi-faceted approach and is based on a traditionalist interpretive perspective. TSQ itself is a team that was formed on the basis of vision and thoughts that are in line with the aim of realizing traditionalist perspectives of thought, this is to bring back traditionalist values into the modern realm or on the basis of avoiding the negative impact of modernity in the realm of interpretation, the majority of which relies on rational aspects, causing the loss of spiritual essence for modern humans. That way in writing TSQ does not involve the thoughts of modern *mufasssirs*, especially on thoughts that do not contain spiritual values in its argumentation.⁴³

³⁸ Maria Massi Dakake is a convert to Islam from a Christian background and is now a scholar of Islamic studies whose disciplinary expertise includes Islamic intellectual history, Quranic studies, Shia and Sufi traditions, and the spirituality and religious experiences of American women. See, "Religious Studies | Faculty and Staff: Maria M Dakake," Religious Studies, accessed January 25, 2025, <https://religiousstudies.gmu.edu/people/mdakakem>.

³⁹ Joseph Edward Barbour Lumbard is a Christian convert born in 1969 and raised in Washinton DC, within the Episcopal church. Joseph E. B. Lumbard is an American Muslim scholar in the discipline of Islamic studies and a specialist in the study of the Quran, Sufism, Islamic philosophy, comparative theology, and Islamic ecology. See, Dar al-Hadith Institue, "Joseph Lumbard," Hadith Net, April 6, 2016, <https://www.hadith.net/en/post/50153/joseph-lumbard/>.

⁴⁰ Mohammed Rustom was born in 1980 in Toronto, Canada, and is a Canadian Muslim scholar of South Asian descent who specializes in Sufism, Islamic philosophy and theology, and Quranic exegesis. See, "Mohammed Rustom | Carleton University - Academia.Edu," accessed January 26, 2025, <https://carleton-ca.academia.edu/MohammedRustom/CurriculumVitae>.

⁴¹ Hossein Nasr et al, *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, xlv.

⁴² Hossein Nasr et al, *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, xliii.

⁴³ Hossein Nasr et al, *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, xliii.





For this vision, TSQ *relies* on the interpretation of traditionalist *mufasssirs* as a reference in its interpretation, TSQ conducts a selective process among the total reference of traditionalist tafsir books to choose interpretations that are more *relevant* to the verse being interpreted. It is noted that the total references used have a total of 41 books⁴⁴, especially the majority of citations made look at the interpretations of Ibn 'Āshur and Ṭabaṭāba'I who have a similar perspective. TSQ considers that traditionalist interpretation is able to bring readers to understand the literal meaning, explore the spiritual meaning of verses and can be a window of diversity and interpretation in theological, spiritual, and historical aspects.

In each period of tafsir development in the classical-contemporary era, each *mufasssir* has its own writing pattern system, in order to facilitate consumers in reading and understanding the product. In this context, the content of TSQ contains three parts consisting of *translation*, *commentary*, and *essay*. The monumental work does not contain the Arabic version of the Quran in it, but directly on the translation followed by the interpretation presented in English and presented in the form of interpretation under the verse (classical style).

In the systematic way, TSQ first explains the general description of the surah. In addition, further explanation is also given as an introduction to the interpretation of the surah, sometimes the author also cites *sirah* literature as well as *Sunni-Shi'ah* Hadeeth literature in explaining the related surah⁴⁵. TSQ provides a *disclaimer* that the translations presented are based on the Arabic text of the Quran, not referring to any translation that has come before⁴⁶. Each verse is given a comprehensive interpretation presented in the form of a commentary below the verse (classical style), the systematization is consistent in the writing pattern from QS. al-Fātiḥah - QS. an-Nās. The third section is in the form of essays that have a separate placement from the translations and interpretations, which are located on the sheet after the interpretation of QS. an-Nās. This section contains a collection of essays written by Muslim scholars from all parts of the Islamic world who are competent in Quranic studies, discussing major themes related to the Quran.

The content of TSQ contains three sections consisting of translations, interpretations and essays. Here TSQ has the main task in the different textual parts of the Quran. In the process, when

⁴⁴ Hossein Nasr et al, *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, lvii.

⁴⁵ Hossein Nasr et al, *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, xliii.

⁴⁶ *The Study Quran: a New Translation and Commentary* often refers to some popular English translations in the West, such as those of Yusuf Ali, Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, A. J. Arberry, Ali Quli Qara'I, and Muhammad Abdel Haleem. However, *The Study Quran: a New Translation and Commentary* is based on the Arabic text itself, and not on previous translations. In the process of translation, the authors apply a form of caution in translating the Arabic of the Quran objectively by not involving new Arabic interpretations. See, Hossein Nasr et al, *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, xlii-xliii.





the first draft of a section of text in the form of translation or interpretation has been completed, each author will conduct further discussions to provide comments and suggestions, the final discussion is given to Seyyed Hossein Nasr to provide additions or final edits. Especially in the translation section, as for the division is:

- a. Caner K. Dagli, containing QS. al-Baqarah - QS. Āli-'Imrān, QS. al-Anfāl - QS. at-Taubah, QS. al-Hajj - QS. al-Qaṣaṣ.
- b. Maria Massi Dakake, containing QS. an-Nisā' - QS. al-A'rāf, QS. Yūnus - QS. Yūsuf, and Ibrāhim - al-Anbiyā'.
- c. Joseph E. B. Lumbard, including al-Fātiḥah, al-Ra'd, al-'Ankabūt - an-Nās.

Furthermore, specializing in the interpretation section, it was handed over to:

- a. Caner K. Dagli, on QS. al-Baqarah - QS. Āli-'Imrān, QS. al Anfāl - QS. at-Taubah, QS. al-Anbiyā' - QS. al-Qaṣaṣ.
- b. Maria Massi Dakake, containing QS. an-Nisā' - QS. al-A'rāf, QS. al-Naḥl - QS. Maryam.
- c. Joseph E. B. Lumbard, including al-Fātiḥah, al-'Ankabūt - an-Nās.
- d. Mohammed Rustom, including QS. Yūnus - al-Ḥijr, Ṭāhā⁴⁷.

Particularly in the essay section, TSQ lists the subjects and selects the authors of each essay through discussions with his team. The selections were global and universal in nature and formed within the framework of traditional Islamic scholarship. The essayists are scholars from different schools of Islamic thought and law, and have a broader scope from all parts of the Islamic world in the East and West. This is evidenced by the participation of the Grand Sheikh of the *Sunni* center of knowledge (al-Azhar University), one of the leading Shi'a Ayatollahs from Iran, and even young Western professors. The editing process of the essay was partly under the full control of Seyyed Hossein Nasr⁴⁸.

The Dynamics of Interpretation Across the Books: Theological and Socio-Historical Constructions in *The Study Quran*

Discussions related to stories contained in sacred texts—specifically between the Qur'an and the Bible—reveal a discrepancy in that the Qur'an is an ahistorical holy book revealed to teach ethical and spiritual values, in contrast to the Bible, which is more historical in nature. Here, TSQ emphasizes

⁴⁷ Hossein Nasr et al, *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, xli.

⁴⁸ Hossein Nasr et al, *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, xli.





the importance of understanding the historical and narrative context surrounding the sacred texts of the Abrahamic traditions⁴⁹. The concept is applied and recognized by means of Biblical referential delivery in a comparative-analytical form with the aim of clarifying the meaning and context of the verse⁵⁰, the application is limited to providing a comprehensive understanding in the historical and narrative context between the verse of the Quran and previous sacred texts, expanding interpretive understanding, and showing an intertextual and comprehensive tradition that allows for a more in-depth and contextual interpretation⁵¹. The main references in this work rely on traditionalist commentaries.

TSQ's response in assessing the condition of the Bible—considering the issue of distortion—can be seen when analyzing the context of ahl al-Kitāb in interpreting QS. al-Baqarah: 75, al-Baqarah: 79, and an-Nisā': 46, where assessing the product of distortion practices against the Bible raises several questions regarding which is correct: the practice of distorting the original text of the Bible or the practice of distorting its interpretation. Normatively, the majority of traditionalist mufassir assess that the Bible has been altered from its original text. Al-Qurthubi is of the view that distortion of the Torah has been practiced by Jewish leaders by changing the law based on personal will⁵². Ibn Kathir responded by quoting the opinions of Sufyan ath-Thawri, Abdurrahman bin Alqamah, as-Suddi, and az-Zuhri that the practice of distorting the Book was carried out by Jewish leaders based on personal thoughts accompanied by claims of divine revelation.⁵³

These studies were proven in Ibn Hazam's research in the 11th century, but if traced back to the pre-Ibn Hazam period—such as al-Razi—who doubted the changes in the sacred texts prior to the Qur'an, there was recognition of changes in interpretation that deviated far from the meaning of the revelation, resulting in changes in spiritual and legal meaning⁵⁴, as well as distorted attitudes that reject the truth⁵⁵. This opinion is also in line with Sayyid Qutub's perspective that the existing

⁴⁹ Hossein Nasr et al, *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, xxvii.

⁵⁰ Goodreads, "The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary," *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, November 14, 2016, <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/15820216-the-study-quran>.

⁵¹ Bahar Davary, "The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary," *Horizons* 43, no. 2 (2016): 397–401, <https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2016.108>.

⁵² Interpretation of QS. al-Baqarah: 75. See, al-Qurthubi, *Al-Jami' Li Ahkam al-Qur'an Terjemah Fathurrahman Abdul Hamid* (Pustaka Azzam, 2015), 2:6.

⁵³ Interpretation of QS. al-Baqarah: 79. See, Ibnu Katsir, *Tafsir Ibnu Katsir* (Pustaka Imam asy-Syafi 'i, 2005), 1:169; J.R. Dummelow also commented that the author of the biblical text used Greek in his work, while Jesus' teachings were delivered in Aramaic. Normatively, copyists would not include what was in the text verbatim in their copies. This shows that the author only believed in his own inconsistent thoughts, or even that the text could be changed based on the author's idealism. See, Asep Setiawan, "The Recognition of Existence an Biblical truth in the Perspective of the Qur'an (Critical Study of the Development of Liberal Islamic Thought in Indonesia)," *TAJIDID: Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 20, no. 2 (2021): 417, <https://doi.org/10.30631/tjd.v20i2.207>.

⁵⁴ Interpretation of QS. al-Baqarah: 75. See, Hossein Nasr et al, *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, 36–37.

⁵⁵ Interpretation of QS. Al-Imrān: 71. See, Hossein Nasr et al., *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, 149.





distortion is an interpretation of the Torah that is not in accordance with what the Torah intended. This practice denies the evidence of the final message and negates the laws and sharia justified by the final holy book, where this unity shows the origin of the two holy texts from one source⁵⁶. In one period, there was a practice of not only misinterpreting but also producing new documents in the name of divine revelation⁵⁷.

From a different perspective, Edip Yuksel is quite critical in responding to the issue of distortion, not only questioning the divine nature of the Bible, but also questioning the abstract nature of the author of the Bible. According to Edip Yuksel, the Bible is not the product of Jesus or his disciples who met Jesus directly, but rather a product influenced by Paul—who was rejected by Jesus' original disciples—based on taking advantage of his worship⁵⁸. Muhammad Asad himself assessed that the practice of distorting the Bible began with the Jews' sense of rejection as a religion inherited exclusively by the Children of Israel (not a universal religion), thus rejecting post-Torah revelations. The distortion carried out by Jewish leaders took the form of text manipulation and interpretation with the aim of gaining profit from the common people and declaring it as an authoritative religion and the religion of choice⁵⁹.

Comprehensively interpreting QS. al-Baqarah: 75 and 79, and an-Nisā': 46, the TSQ perspective tends to focus more on the distortion of meaning and interpretation rather than the distortion of the text itself. This is in line with al-Razi's argument, who also doubts the existence of distortion of the text, but acknowledges the distortion of meaning. TSQ considers this view as one of two possible interpretations, rather than a single consensus. TSQ emphasizes that the Qur'an narratively acknowledges the validity of the pre-Qur'anic sacred texts—the Torah and the Gospel—and that the narrative criticism of the People of the Book is a moral and historical rebuke, leading to a total rejection of previous revelations.

Regarding TSQ's view in assessing the Bibel, it causes the Bibel's horizon to be assimilated with the *mufasssir's* horizon as outlined in TSQ so that the existing contextualization is a religious dialogue, but on the one hand there is TSQ's tendency in perennialism and emphasis on the plurality of

⁵⁶ Interpretation of QS. an-Nisā': 46. See, Sayyid Quthb, *Tafsir Fi Zhilalil Qur'an Terjemah As'ad Yasin*, 1st ed. (Gema Insani, 2004), 2:382.

⁵⁷ Interpretation of QS. al-Baqarah: 79. See, Hossein Nasr et al., *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, 38.

⁵⁸ Penafsiran QS. al-Baqarah: 79 dan 104, dan . Lihat, Edip Yuksel et al., *Quran: A Reformist Translation* (Brainbow Press, 2011), 66–67.

⁵⁹ Penafsiran QS. al-Baqarah: 75 dan 79. Lihat, Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Dar al-Andalus, 1980), 17.





interpretations⁶⁰. The contextualization product still has limitations by placing the Bibel as a historical text and prioritizing the interpretation of the authority of the Quran⁶¹, this practice can be seen from the form of Bibel limitations used into 2 classifications:

First, historical and literary contextualization. In a context related to the issue of Biblical distortion in TSQ's perspective is more inclined to the possibility of distortion of interpretation and meaning than the possibility of text distortion, the narrative of criticism in the Quran related to *ahl al-Kitab* is a moral and historical rebuke to the attitude of total denial of previous revelation. TSQ's acknowledgment, however, does not change the hierarchy of sacred texts between the Quran and the Bibel to the same caste. Normatively, the Bibel is superior in historical aspects when compared to the Quran⁶², here the application of the Bibel is used in explaining the historical context of certain verses in the Quran. This classification is seen with many stories in the Quran such as the story of the prophet Joseph in QS. Yūsuf (12) with the aim of providing a comprehensive understanding of the historical context of the verse, as well as an understanding of the concept of creation, or related to major phenomena. By applying historical analysis, it can clarify the uniqueness and position of the Quran's message.⁶³

Second, critical intertextual studies. The application of Bibel in TSQ can be seen from the form of presentation which is limited to comparative-analytical, not polemical. Evidence of application can be seen when discussing the concept of *khilafah* in QS. al-Baqarah: 30-34, the concept of eschatology where the phenomenon of end-time earthquakes in QS. al-Zalzalah, as well as legal concepts related to the value of human life to show the universalism of Qur'anic ethics in QS. al-Māidah: 32. TSQ's adoption of the intertextual approach as an expression of recognition of the historical and theological relationship between the Quran and previous sacred texts, the product of this practice allows readers to understand how the Quran responds to the Biblical tradition⁶⁴. The tendency of TSQ's practice towards Biblical referentiality has been praised by the majority of researchers for its efforts to map the inter-textual dialog without obscuring the authority of the Quran.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Content Team, "Do You Recommend the Study Quran?," *SeekersGuidance*, December 2, 2015, <https://seekersguidance.org/articles/general-artices/the-study-quran/>.

⁶¹ Regarding the controversy surrounding the application of the Bible in the realm of interpretation, Ibn Taymiyyah mediated by providing the following limitations: a) Isra'iliyat that is in line with Islam needs to be justified and its narration permitted. b) Isra'iliyat that are known to be false because they contradict Islamic law must be rejected. c) Isra'iliyat whose truth or falsity is unknown must be ignored or neither rejected nor accepted. See, Ibn Taimiyyah, *Muqaddimah Fi Ushul Al-Tafsir* (Dar al-Maktabah al-Hidayah, 1980), 100.

⁶² Hossein Nasr et al., *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, xxvii.

⁶³ Goodreads, "The Study Quran."

⁶⁴ Davary, "The Study Quran."

⁶⁵ Cantelon, "The Study Quran: A Non-Muslim Review," *Harnessing Chaos*, November 14, 2016, <https://cantelon.org/2016/11/13/the-study-quran-a-non-muslim-review/>.





Regarding the form of limitations applied, as well as the *quantity* of Biblical references—which are considered to have experienced *tahrif*—which is quite significant in its application, TSQ still maintains the main authority on the Quran. The influence of the Bible in the relation of TSQ is indirect, its application is more to interfaith dialogue and relevant Christian theological issues without explicit use as interpretation material so as not to make it a source of law and limited to a tool to clarify the context and add perspectives to interpretation, on the other hand this practice also helps non-Muslim readers to understand the Quran in a more familiar framework⁶⁶. When seen in the development of modern interpretation, the influence of the Bibel can enrich interpretation by opening up space for dialogue across sacred text traditions and broadening the horizons of understanding, although on the one hand the practice raises the assessment of reliance on belief in the truth of the Quran without sufficiently criticizing the Bibel used as a reference, concerns also arise about Bibel references being used as apologetics tools that obscure fundamental theological differences. In general, however, Biblical references can be considered a progressive step in modern exegetical studies that have begun to highlight the value of pluralism.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr's Religious Inclusivism in The Study Quran

In analyzing Seyyed Hossein Nasr's views in the theological aspect, specifically on the view of the Abrahamic tradition which is the forerunner of the Biblical referential application. Related to this, researchers use the theory of John Hick⁶⁷—focusing on religious inclusivism—who initiated the *Pluralistic Hypothesis* theory described in the book *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses of the Transcendent*, which states that all religions are culturally manifestations of the *same* divine reality (*the real*)⁶⁸. The *pluralistic hypothesis* is the final product born from John Hick's anxiety about exclusivism in Christian theology and develops the idea of inclusivism and ends in pluralism which is comprehensively explained in the book *Problems of Religious Pureism*⁶⁹. In the context of TSQ by making the Bible part of the interpretive reference, this dimension shows Seyyed Hossein Nasr's position as an inclusivist. In proving this inclusivism, it raises a fundamental question regarding how

⁶⁶ Goodreads, "The Study Quran."

⁶⁷ John Harwood Hick was born in 1942 in Yorkshire, England. John Hick is famous as a figure of pluralism, this is due to his theological anxiety. Many monumental works that respond to this anxiety, such as *God and the Universe of Faiths* (1973), *God Has Many Names* (1980), *An Interpretation of Religion* (1988), and *Disputed Questions in Theology and the Philosophy of Religion* (1993) have contributed a lot to the world, especially relations in interfaith and cross-culture which tend to emphasize the esoteric side universally rather than the exoteric side symbolically-formally. See, John Hick, *God Has Many Names* (Westminster Press, 1980), 2–5.

⁶⁸ John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses of the Transcendent* (Yale University Press, 1989), 235–40.

⁶⁹ John Hick, *Problems of Religious Puralism* (Macmillan, 1985), 31–38.





Seyyed Hossein Nasr's assessment of the Bible, this question will be a strong basis in showing his religious inclusivism.

This stage is a process related to the assessment of the abrahmic tradition/other religious communities have a direction to the same divine reality, despite having different rituals. In the context of applying the Bible as an interpretive reference, starting with the proof of judgment in an interview conducted by Bob Abernethy⁷⁰, Seyyed Hossein Nasr judged in one point of view that the Bible (Old Testament and New Testament) is the same as the Quran. This argument is based on an assessment of Christians and Jews who believe in the Bible as scripture, a concept similar to Muslims who consider the Quran as scripture. In a way, Muslims also regard the Bible as the word of God—despite the hermeneutic practice of their sacred texts—where it is recorded in the Quran that the Torah and Injil are pre-Qur'an books of God's word. It is further explained, regarding the striking difference that both Jewish-Christian sacred texts have a long period of codification, as well as having diverse codification products. The product, where Jews read the Orthodox in Greek, and Christians read the Bible/Bibel in English, is different from the Quran which consistently maintains the originality of the post-codification product. This aspect is a factor in losing the authoritativeness of the Torah and Gospel.

Here Seyyed Hossein Nasr shows his position of inclusivism, where he shows the hierarchy between the Quran and the Bible/Bibel that the Quran is the true word of God, and in the Bible's position that the word of God is Christ himself. The diverse Abrahamic traditions that exist between Judaism-Christianity, and Islam are referred to as *ummah abraham* which means the community of Abraham. This is explained in his book *Ideals and Realities of Islam* that the prophet Abraham as a symbolic religion of monotheism, this is a form of relationship between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam which inherit the Abrahamic tradition in the frame of different *sharia*/creeds. Seyyed Hossein Nasr considers these differences not to be problematic, because the *treatise* is an exoteric essence that is not absolute⁷¹.

This process is a continuation of the analysis of Seyyed Hossein Nasr's inclusivism paradigm, where the product of this paradigm is obtained through his intellectual journey, which has been deeply involved in philosophy, science, Sufism, history, and pluralism. The context of the Bible's

⁷⁰ "February 7, 2003 ~ Seyyed Hossein Nasr Extended Interview | February 7, 2003 | Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly | PBS," *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, February 7, 2003, <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2003/02/07/february-7-2003-seyyed-hossein-nasr-extended-interview/8077/>.

⁷¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam* (George Allen & Unwin, 1966), 34.





involvement in Seyyed Hossein Nasr's life was formed from his early education at The Peddie School in Highstown, New Jersey, where he studied Christianity, supported by a long period of living in an Islamic minority environment, which was a major reason for his familiarity with Christian-Jewish literature and religious comparisons. In 1951, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Seyyed Hossein Nasr studied philosophy and the history of science independently. He continued his education at Harvard University, specializing in history, science, and Islamic philosophy⁷². In further education at Harvard, Seyyed Hossein Nasr also studied history and Islamic thought to HAR. Gibb, the history of science to George Sarton, and the history of theology and philosophy to Harry Wolfson⁷³.

This intellectual history became the basis for Seyyed Hossein Nasr's thinking on philosophy, leading him to develop perennial philosophy. In his perennial philosophy, Seyyed Hossein Nasr argues that despite differences in religious practices and doctrines, the spiritual essence of all religions remains the same and is transcendental⁷⁴. This shows that Seyyed Hossein Nasr views religions not only from the outside, but also as part of a universal discourse on revelation, or divine values from a spiritualist perspective. This pluralistic view still contains limitations by inviting Muslims to understand and appreciate the values that exist in other religious traditions while adhering to Islamic principles.

This is the final stage in which John Hick proposes that religion is not an object of assessment of truth, but is centered on God. This shows that Seyyed Hossein Nasr in assessing the Bibel is limited to historical texts or has a continuity of revelation applied in TSQ. The corroborating claim to his position of inclusivism is noted in the purpose of the monumental project, where reference to the Bibel as an interpretive reference is limited to religious dialogue, with the authority of the Quran read from a traditionalist and scholarly perspective. TSQ places the Bibel's position as a historical text, but this does not make it a bastion of polarization between the two sacred texts, all returning to the basic value of the Quran which is intended for all humans, not limited to certain communities, such as Jews⁷⁵.

⁷² Sucipto, *Ensiklopedi Tokoh Islam: Dari Abu Bakr Sampai Nasr Dan Qardhawi*, 323.

⁷³ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Tasawuf Sebagai Pembebasan Manusia Modern: Telaah Signifikansi Konsep "Tradisionalisme Islam"*. Terjemah Ali Maksum (Pustaka Belajar, 2003), 38–39.

⁷⁴ Jaipuri Harahap, "Sayyed Hossein Nasr tentang Filsafat Perennial dan Human Spiritualitas," *Aqlania* 8, no. 2 (2017): 191, <https://doi.org/10.32678/aqlania.v8i02.1026>.

⁷⁵ Hossein Nasr et al., *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary*, xxvii.





In a review of the monumental work, it is explained that many of the verses interpreted in TSQ reject Christian or Jewish doctrines, but there is an attempt to show the universal benefits of salvation to various religious traditions⁷⁶. This can be seen from the significant number of 30 Juz of the Quran when quoting the Bibel in TSQ—not used as an authoritative reference in the interpretation—which is used to form a dialog between the two texts, this shows that the author sees the relationship between the Quran and the Bibel as having a continuity of revelation.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr's Philosophical Hermeneutics in The Study Quran

In analyzing the socio-historical Seyyed Hossein Nasr who has a great influence in the final practice by applying the Bibel as an interpretive reference. Related to this, researchers use the theory of Hans-Georg Gadamer⁷⁷ who initiated a Philosophical Hermeneutics concept explained in the book *Wahrheit und Methode (Truth and Method)*, which contains specifically related to the text, but in general contains the object of study of social sciences and humanities⁷⁸. Gadamer's main hermeneutic-philosophical theories are classified into historical influence, pre-understanding, horizon assimilation, and application. Gadamer's hermeneutic approach is used—specifically on historical influence, pre-understanding, and horizon assimilation—with the aim of analyzing how Seyyed Hossein Nasr's mindset developed, as well as the author's efforts in shaping the relationship between the texts of the Quran and the Bible.

This theory shows that a product of interpretation is not born in a vacuum, but there is a certain hermeneutic situation surrounding the interpreter⁷⁹. This shows that every interpreter who will practice interpretation of a text, is always surrounded or there are factors that cause the birth of interpretive products to the interpreter, both in the form of tradition, culture, life experience, education and so on. This also applies to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, it can be seen from the hermeneutic situation that surrounds him is very complex when making the Bibel as a reference in the monumental project.

In Seyyed Hossein Nasr's theological dimension, his assessment of the Bible is inclusive, a product of his intellectual roots in the disciplines of philosophy, science, Sufism, history, and

⁷⁶ Mobeen Vaid, "The Study Quran: A Review," *MuslimMatters.org*, December 14, 2015, <https://muslimmatters.org/2015/12/14/the-study-quran-a-review/>.

⁷⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer was born in 1900 in Malbough, Germany. Gadamer is known as a contemporary writer in the field of hermeneutics, especially the monumental work *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzuge einer Philosophischen Hermeneutik* (1960) which made him the youngest philosopher in the field of hermeneutics. See, K. Bertens, *Filsafat Barat Abad XX Inggris-Jerman* (Gramedia, 1983), 233.

⁷⁸ Sahiron Syamsuddin, *Hermeneutika Dan Pengembangan Ulum Al-Qur'an* (Pesantren Nawesa Press, 2009), 44–45.

⁷⁹ Syamsuddin, *Hermeneutika Dan Pengembangan Ulum Al-Qur'an*, 45.





pluralism. His involvement with the Bible began at The Piddie School in New Jersey, where he studied Christianity in the context of a Muslim minority, allowing him to become familiar with Jewish-Christian literature and comparative religion. This experience continued at a higher level at MIT through self-taught studies in philosophy and the history of science, as well as at Harvard University, where he specialized in history, philosophy, and Islamic thought under such great figures as H.A.R. Gibb, George Sarton, and Harry Wolfson⁸⁰. This background shaped Seyyed Hossein Nasr's philosophical construct and led to the birth of perennial philosophy, which assesses that the differences in practice and doctrine as well as the spiritual core in each Abrahamic tradition are similar and transcendental⁸¹. This view shows that Seyyed Hossein Nasr places every Abrahamic tradition within a universal discourse on revelation and divine values, and invites Muslims to foster tolerance without abandoning Islamic principles.

Another hermeneutic situation in which Seyyed Hossein Nasr uses the Bibel as a reference in interpretation is limited to interfaith dialogical forms, this was done in the effort to write TSQ which lasted for less than a decade because the target consumers of the work are not limited to Muslims, but to non-Muslims. Seyyed Hossein Nasr's thought is heavily influenced by Ibn 'Āshur and Ṭabaṭaba'I-in the context of QS. Yūsuf (12): 23-42, there are no quotations from these two *mufasssirs* that are in line with his thoughts. In the context of Biblical references, Ibn 'Āshur's interpretation also makes Biblical references (*isrā'īliyyāt*)⁸², unlike Ṭabaṭaba'I who is quite critical / rejects Biblical references (*isrā'īliyyāt*).⁸³

When traced back, the hermeneutic situation that became the basis for Seyyed Hossein Nasr's selection of Biblical referentials in TSQ was also influenced by the 9/11 phenomenon of Islamophobic idealism in New York. The collective psychic and mental trauma is still quite evident after the 9/11 phenomenon⁸⁴, although Seyyed Hossein Nasr was not in New York when the phenomenon occurred⁸⁵. Given the phenomenon, as well as the Bibel referential form presented in TSQ as an effort

⁸⁰ Hossein Nasr, *Tasawuf Sebagai Pembebasan Manusia Modern: Telaah Signifikansi Konsep "Tradisionalisme Islam"*. Terjemah Ali Maksum, 38–39.

⁸¹ Harahap, "Sayed Hossein Nasr tentang Filsafat Perennial dan Human Spiritualitas," 191.

⁸² It is noted in some of Ibn 'Āshur's interpretations, especially in QS. al-Kahf : 60-82 which also contains *isrā'īliyyāt*. See, Nisa Ikhwatul et al., "Ad-Dakhil Fit-Tafsir at-Tahrir Wa at-Tanwir (Analisis Israiliyyat Pada Kisah Nabi Musa a.s Dan Khidir Dalam QS. al-Kahfi 60-82)," *Al Muhafidz: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 2, no. 2 (2022): 173–83, 2, <https://doi.org/10.57163/almuhafidz.v2i2.44>.

⁸³ Ahmad Fauzan, "Manhaj Tafsir al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an Karya Muhammad Husain Tabataba'i," *Al - Tadabbur: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 3, no. 02 (2018): 128, <https://doi.org/10.30868/at.v3i02.262>.

⁸⁴ "Twenty years after 9/11, what have we learned about collective trauma? With Roxane Cohen Silver, PhD," <https://www.apa.org/>, accessed March 6, 2025, <https://www.apa.org/news/podcasts/speaking-of-psychology/9-11-twenty-years>.

⁸⁵ In an interview conducted by Bob Abernethy to Seyyed Hossein Nasr regarding 9/11, Seyyed Hossein Nasr gave his opinion that "I was in Cairo on 9-11, and I went straight to the industrial area at Al-Azhar University, the heart of the city, to see what the reaction of





to dialogue between religions, this includes being Seyyed Hossein Nasr's effort to reintroduce a peaceful and open Islam—unlike what was shown in the 9/11 phenomenon—in order to refute, justify, and straighten out that Islam is an embracing religion, therefore Seyyed Hossein Nasr presents the Bible in a dialogical form that in the Islamic tradition and the Christian tradition have common goals and peace.

Further evidence can be seen in the pre-9/11 period in the discipline, where the development of a complete interpretation of the 30 Juz in the West began by taking the example of the interpretation of QS. Yūsuf (12): 23-42 related to the story of the prophet Yusuf who was seduced by Zulaikha and the phenomenon of interpreting the dreams of prisoners — The Holy Quran by Abdullah Yusuf Ali — is absent in the application of the Bible as a primary reference for interpretation. Even Muhammad Asad himself—a convert and quite familiar with biblical tradition—in The Message of the Quran only quotes limited passages from Genesis 39: 19-20⁸⁶ and presented as a form of comparative intertextual narrative. This proves that the 9/11 phenomenon had a significant impact on the discipline of interpretation in the West, especially on the application of the Bible as a reference.

This theory is a continuation of the previous theory, namely the hermeneutic situation. This theory explains that if the form of awareness of sensitivity to the influence of the interpreter's hermeneutic situation⁸⁷, it will automatically form a pre-understanding or prejudice against the text. This is intended to create a dialogue process between the interpreter and the text, and it should be underlined that the pre-understanding is open to be criticized by the interpreter himself when the form of awareness of his pre-understanding is not in accordance with the intention of the interpreted text.

In the context of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, looking at the traces of influence by history shows a complex hermeneutical situation surrounding the life of Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Starting from the influence of academic traces that gave birth to Seyyed Hossein Nasr's thought constructs in assessing other religious traditions, to the 9/11 phenomenon that gave birth to Islamophobic idealism in New York. This situation formed Seyyed Hossein Nasr's horizon before touching the application of Biblical references in TSQ, this is the forerunner of the formation of Seyyed Hossein Nasr's pre-understanding and gave birth to *prejudice* in the application of Biblical references. The polar form between Seyyed

the people was like, and everyone was very, very saddened by the loss of life that had occurred". See, "February 7, 2003 ~ Seyyed Hossein Nasr Extended Interview | February 7, 2003 | Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly | PBS."

⁸⁶ Example of interpretations in QS. Yūsuf (12): 23-42. See, Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, 340.

⁸⁷ Syamsuddin, *Hermeneutika Dan Pengembangan Ulum Al-Qur'an*, 46.





Hossein Nasr's horizon and the horizon of the text is not engaged as a competition, but there is a neutralizing process, so that it will be in sync with the next stage—the theory of horizon assimilation—regarding how the dialogue between the two horizons occurs.

This stage is the process of horizon fusion, where the interpreter must be aware that there are two horizons in the process of understanding, namely the reader's horizon (reader's horizon) obtained from the hermeneutic situation that creates pre-understanding and the text horizon (horizon of knowledge) which needs to be underlined that the text has a horizon that may be different from the interpreter's horizon⁸⁸. In the context of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the effort to merge and dialogue his horizon with the horizon of the text can be done well supported by his intellectual capacity, this can be seen with the purpose and presentation of Biblical referential application. Historically, the study of the intertext between the Quran and the Bible has contained endless debates/polemics between the traditionalist school and the orientalist school - on the pretext of authenticity, Here Seyyed Hossein Nasr dialogues the gap surrounded by hermeneutic situations such as academic traces and the 9/11 phenomenon related to Islamophobia, so that it becomes a contribution or bridge between the traditionalist school and the orientalist school by presenting the Biblical referential form and complemented by traditionalist books of interpretation.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr's contextualization of the text horizon is well done, which is to maintain the authority of the Quran and build dialogue between other religious traditions. Seyyed Hossein Nasr in his interpretation relies heavily on the interpretations of traditionalist *mufasssirs* and combines them with Biblical references without making them the source of authority in interpretation. This effort makes the horizon of the text assimilated with Seyyed Hossein Nasr's horizon so that the chosen contextualization is religious dialogue, this is also reinforced by the form of Biblical referential presentation which is limited to comparative-analytical (not polemical) and makes it a means of dialogue between Abrahamic traditions. Seyyed Hossein Nasr's contextualization may be acceptable, because it does not contradict the horizon of the text and contextualization is needed so that the Quran can be understood by the general public, not limited to Muslims but non-Muslims can also consume it.

Conclusion

⁸⁸ Syamsuddin, *Hermeneutika Dan Pengembangan Ulum Al-Qur'an*, 49.





The practice of involving the Bible in the realm of interpretation is not a new phenomenon, but this does not make it a common practice that is acceptable to the public. Seyyed Hossein Nasr's efforts through TSQ were born out of the social, political, and academic dynamics that shaped his thinking. In the context of the Bible's contribution to the realm of interpretation, Seyyed Hossein Nasr himself has a basis for assessing the Bible as a text with complex historical value, and this involvement has the aim of expanding the meaning of the verses of the Qur'an. Given the issue of distortion, TSQ emphasizes the aspect of distortion of meaning and interpretation rather than distortion of the text. The view of distortion indirectly imposes limitations by placing the Bible as a historical text limited to the functions of historical contextualization and intertextual analysis. However, in the theological dimension, it still explains Seyyed Hossein Nasr's position as an inclusive person who views the Bible—as part of the Abrahamic tradition—as having universal theological value followed by Abrahamic esoteric unity, despite claims rejecting Christian-Jewish doctrine by affirming the position of Islam and the Qur'an as authoritative sharia.

In the socio-historical dimension, the involvement of the Bible in TSQ can be understood as part of his socio-intellectual horizon. With a background in philosophy, Islamic theology, science, Sufism, and the contemporary dynamics of post-9/11, he realizes his interpretation within the framework of inter-traditional dialogue, while maintaining the hierarchy of the Qur'an's authority. Thus, the contribution of using the Bible as a reference is to broaden the horizon of understanding of the Qur'an. Theoretically, this approach can enrich the discourse of contemporary interpretation with the integration of the dimensions of religious inclusivism and historical hermeneutics, opening up space for the discipline of intertextuality across traditions as a strategy for dealing with the issue of Islamophobia.

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