



Fostering Religious Harmony Through the Inclusive Understanding of Some Exclusive Verses in the Bible and the Qur'an – A Case of Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The problem that often arises in Indonesian society is the occurrence of clashes in society as a result of the use of certain texts, both in the Bible and the Qur'an, for certain purposes. The purpose of this article was to explore the use of certain texts in the Bible and the Qur'an, which are understood exclusively, with certain interests ethnically, socially, politically and economically, thus creating a clash. The results of this understanding are conveyed as absolute truth from God so that no one can deny it. As a result, hate speech and conflict have emerged in Indonesian society. The research method used was a descriptive qualitative method which involved collecting materials in the form of books and articles and analyzing them. The results revealed a need for the formation of an inclusive understanding between the two religions so that a life dialogue occurs to maintain harmonious relations in Indonesian society. State the recommendations that have been made as well. This article invites religions in Indonesia, especially Christianity and Islam, to understand their respective holy books inclusively, to build a life together that is harmonious and peaceful.

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INTRODUCTION

Two major religions in Indonesia are Islam and Christianity. According to the census results, conducted by the Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) (Central Statistics Agency) in 2010, 87.18% of 237,641,326 Indonesians were Muslims, 6.96% were Protestants, 2.9% were Catholic, 1.69% were Hindu, 0.72% Buddha, 0.05% Confucianism, 0.13% other religions, and 0.38% did not answer.¹ Based on the results of this census, Islam is the majority and Christians (Protestant and Catholic) are the second largest religion with a total of 9.86%.

The adherents of the two religions have been living together since the 15th or 16th century until now.² However, clashes have occurred between hardline groups from both religions at certain times. One trigger is the misuse of certain verses in the Bible and the Qur'an to achieve certain goals in society, using economic, ethnic, and political issues. For example, when Ahok, the former Governor of DKI Jakarta, gave a speech on Pulau Seribu, an island north of Jakarta, on September 27, 2016, he

¹ "Sensus Penduduk Indonesia," 2010, https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sensus_Penduduk_Indonesia_2010.

² Jan S. Aritonang, *Sejarah Perjumpaan Kristen Dan Islam Di Indonesia* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2004).

quoted QS Surah Al-Maida [5]:51. 'O ye who believe, do not take the Jews and Christians into your leaders; some of them are leaders for others. Whoever among you takes them as leaders, then indeed that person belongs to them. Lo! Allah does not guide the wrongdoers.' This quotation was interpreted by hardline groups in Islam as blasphemy. As a result, the North Jakarta State Administration sentenced Ahok to two years in prison.³

This study does not seek to discuss any further the issue of Ahok's speech. Suffice it to say that certain verses in the Bible and the Qur'an are misused, if those verses are interpreted exclusively. This study only focuses on some texts in the Bible and the Qur'an, because sometimes those texts are interpreted exclusively and explained without a deep comprehension of their meaning. In the Bible, those texts are Jhn 14:6, and Acts 4:12. In the Qur'an, those texts are Surah Ali Imran [3]:19 and 85. If those texts are read and explained without a deep understanding of their context, then their meanings can be misunderstood.

The current challenge is the perception among hardline groups in Islam and Christianity that their teachings are the absolute truth, whereas other teachings are heretical. As a result, there is an attempt to justify hate speech through social media and all acts of violence in the name of religion against others of a different religion. Indeed, it must be admitted that ethnic issues can be a trigger for violence between groups in society but there is no denying that the emergence of violence is also caused by religious issues. For example, the trigger that resulted in the conflict in Maluku that occurred on January 19, 1999, was an ordinary crime between migrants and indigenous people. However, the conflict escalated into a conflict that had religious nuances. Both religious groups were attacking each other, resulting in arson and causing many people to become victims.⁴ The action was carried out in the name of religion.

In commenting on religious violence, K. H. Gus Nuril Arifin determined that violence originated from not understanding religious teachings properly.⁵ More firmly, Habib Saqqaf bin Mahdi has asserted that someone with a good understanding of religion who has internalized the great spirit embodied in it will never commit acts of terrorism or other forms of abuse. Acts of violence are not in accordance with the teachings of Islam.⁶

This study will therefore make an effort to explore texts that are interpreted and explained exclusively without a deep understanding of their meanings. The study will also provide explanations on some inclusive texts that can be used as a basis to maintain inter-religious harmony in Indonesian pluralistic society. In conclusion, the study will give some suggestions to foster religious harmony.

The Bible Texts Explained

1. John 14:6

In John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." A literal interpretation of the text will bring the reader to the exclusive understanding that there is no other way through which one can be saved except through Jesus. The view that Jesus is the only way of salvation is confirmed in the manifesto of an evangelical group in the Philippines, which states, "We recognize that various other religions and ideologies are not alternative paths to God and that human spirituality, if not redeemed by Christ, will not lead to God but be condemned because Christ is the only way."⁷ Packer and Oden recognize the general revelation that encompasses all of His creation so that truth, beauty, and goodness can be found in many non-Christian religious belief systems, but there is no guarantee of finding alternative "gospels" or other paths to salvation.⁸ This recognition has an influence on Jonar Situmorang in Indonesia as well. According to Situmorang, Jesus is the only way to heaven and there is no other way, except through Jesus.⁹ From the manifesto of the evangelical groups and the opinion of Situmorang, it is clear that Jesus is understood as the only way

³ "https://www.bbc.com/Indonesia/Indonesia-39853373," December 1, 2018.

⁴ "Tempo Magazine, Edition 9," February 15, 1999.

⁵ Harian Suara Pembaruan Daily Newspaper, 27 July 2010, 20.

⁶ Harian Suara Pembaruan Daily Newspaper, 9 October 2010, 19

⁷ J. I. Packer and Thomas C. Oden, *One Faith: Evangelical Consensus* (Bandung, Jakarta: STT Bandung, BPK Gunung Mulia, 2011).

⁸ Packer and Oden, *One Faith: Evangelical Consensus*:71.

⁹ Jonar Situmorang, *7 Jesus' Statements* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Andi, 2011).

to heaven and there is no other way except through Jesus. It means that the way to heaven or salvation is closed to those who do not believe in Jesus. A more assertive statement has been conveyed by Togardo Siburian. According to him, there is no salvation outside Christianity. The person who holds that there is salvation outside Christianity fails to grasp the essence of Christianity and God's purpose for Christians. Furthermore, Siburian states that the attitude of relativizing the core of Christian teachings and the Bible is very irresponsible towards God and the absolutes of Christianity.¹⁰ In the view of Siburian, the way to heaven is closed to adherents of other religions. These views can cause hatred towards and conflict with those who don't believe in Jesus.

In the Gospel of John, this text appears in a farewell conversation between Jesus and his disciples. Because it was a farewell conversation, his disciples were apprehensive about their future. Therefore, Peter wanted to know where Jesus was going (Jhn 13:35), and meanwhile, Philip was anxious to know whether Jesus would show them the Father (Jhn 14:8). In this troubled context, Thomas asks Jesus, "Lord, we do not know where you go, so how will we know the way?" Jesus answers, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me". Jesus speaks these words to his disciples who have become his followers. These words of Jesus are not intended to be a mission for the conversion of non-Christians. In this context, the words of Jesus are his way of consoling his anxious disciples.¹¹ The question is, why were Jesus' disciples anxious?

To answer these questions, D. Moody Smith and David Rensberger have revealed that Jesus' disciples were anxious because the context of the conversation was an atmosphere of controversy between the leaders of the Jewish and the Johannine communities. The controversy is reflected in the words of Jesus, "My kingdom is not of this world" (Jhn 18:36), while the Jews said, "We have no king other than Caesar" (Jhn 19:15). In the eyes of John, the Jews' statement reflects their total rejection of Jesus as Messiah.¹² The consequence of the conflict was that the Jewish leaders tried to suppress Christian groups that did not agree with their teachings. In that connection, the Johannine community suffered oppression, which led to their exclusion from the synagogue.¹³ The exclusion caused a crisis of identity.

In order to overcome the crisis, the Johannine community tried to root their identity in Jesus and make a strong claim for their faith. Yap Kim Hao is correct in saying that every new religious movement has an exclusive tendency. Exclusivism arises because the adherents of the new religion want to make a strong claim to separate themselves from their parent religion, just as Christianity did when emerging from Judaism. When their teachings and identity were questioned, they became more exclusive. The exclusivism made them more aggressive and expansive.¹⁴ Thus, this passage was developed in a situation of conflict with the Jewish leaders. In the conflict situation, Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me".

In the Old Testament, the notions of 'the way' and 'the truth' refer to certain understandings. First, in some passages of the Isaiah tradition, 'the way' refers to the highway on which God's people will return to the Holy Land (Isaiah 35:8, 40:3, 42:16). This tradition was quoted in the Fourth Gospel, Jhn 1:23, to prepare for Jesus' mission. Second, in the other passages of the Old Testament, as used by rabbis and the Qumran community, 'the way' was understood ethically, pointing to the way of life of Israel in implementing the law (Ps. 119:30). 'The way' and 'the life' was explained by God to humans (Ps. 16:11). Tannaim also spoke of the Torah as the way (m.Abod 6:4), and later rabbis spoke of the Torah as the 'path of life'. According to the wisdom tradition, 'the way' is the way of righteousness and wisdom. In early Jewish sources, 'the way' refers to behaviour.¹⁵ Among the Qumran community, those who fit into that group were those who had chosen 'the way' (1 Qumran Scroll ix:17-18), whereas apostates were people who had deviated from 'the way'. The regulations concerning community life were also seen as 'the way' as well. Evidently, the Qumran community saw their community as 'the

¹⁰ Togardo Siburian, *The Framework of Religious Missionary Theology* (Bandung: STT Bandung, 2004).

¹¹ Israyēl Celvanāyakam, *Biblical Insights on Inter-Faith Dialogue* (Bangalore: Board for Theological Text Book Programme of South Asia, 1995).

¹² D Moody Smith, *Johannine Christianity: Essays on Its Setting, Sources and Theology* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006).

¹³ David Rensberger, *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community* (Westminster Press, 1988).

¹⁴ Kim Hao Yap, *Doing Theology in a Pluralistic World* (Methodist Book Room, The Methodist Centre, 1990).

¹⁵ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John. A Commentary Vol 1* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2004).

way, the truth and the life'. Those who became members of the community had to separate themselves from the place where the wicked lived and go into the desert to prepare the way for the Lord.

In contrast to the views of the Old Testament and the Qumran movement, according to John the Baptist, 'the way' is human life (Mt. 3:3; Isa. 40:3). Every human life must be prepared for the coming of the Lord. Afterward, Christians adopted this idea and applied it to themselves, as when they were living 'the way' of the Lord (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14-22). These early Christians saw themselves as being "the Lord's way".¹⁶ Thus, it can be said that Jhn 14:6 reflects a chain that has its origin in the Old Testament, was modified by the Qumran community, and then adopted by the Christian community as a designation for themselves. Such appropriation of terminology is something that was common among the early Christian community.

So, when Jesus calls himself the way, the truth, and the life, he ensures safety for every person who is in communion with him. The same idea is seen also in the following words of Jesus, "I am the door. If anyone enter by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture" (Jhn 10:9).¹⁷ The words of Jesus have to do with his mission to come into the world, that is to save this world (Jhn 10:10) Thus, according to the Johannine community that was experiencing persecution by Jewish religious leaders, life is only found in fellowship with Jesus.

Based on this observation, this study is of the position that what Jesus says here, according to the Johannine community, is a confession of faith or creed expressed by Jhn and his community based on their faith experience. Every person, based on an experience of faith in God, can say that they believe in God who is their savior. However, it is a subjective experience that cannot be forced upon others who are outside the faith. Such coercion will result in a conflict that is not necessary. This is because the understanding of 'the way to God' is also known in Islam. Cak Nur asserted that Islam itself is 'the way' to God. The way is plural. It means that there is not only one way but there are many ways. The ways were not the goal, but only a means. Even though the ways are different and diverse, all of the ways lead to God.¹⁸

2. Acts 4:12: "And safety is not in anybody other than in him, because under heaven there is no other name given to men by which we must be saved".

This text is sometimes interpreted in a literal manner as a statement that Jesus is the only Savior. According to Dixon, there is no other way to get salvation. Only Jesus has the power to save people.¹⁹ The same view was conveyed by Peter H. Davids. According to him, Jesus is the only bearer of salvation because Jesus alone can release someone from God's judgment. Therefore, every request for salvation must be addressed to Jesus. Davids further stated that, if God had sent His Son to die even though there were other ways to obtain salvation, then God was a masochistic or sadistic person. He said that Peter's words were delivered in the context of justice against Peter in the Jewish religious court.²⁰ When discussing this text, Dixon and Davids have blocked the way to salvation for followers of other religions. It is true, as Davids points out, that the court is the context in which Peter made this statement. But Davids's description of the context is not complete.

As seen, the context of this text is that it is given as an answer to a question of the Jewish council in Jerusalem. They asked, "By what power or what name did you do this?" This question was based on the experience of Peter, who had healed a lame man in the temple using the name of Jesus.²¹ Peter conveys these words as a confession of faith that he utters in the context of the threat and the exclusivist attitude of the Jewish leaders toward Peter and Jhn in the Sanhedrin court. In his comment on this text, Dunn is right when he says that this text is an expression of a vibrant faith, but it should be noted that Acts 4:12 is formulated as a confession of the early Christian community, not as a model

¹⁶ Keener, *The Gospel of John. A Commentary Vol 1*; Raymond Edward Brown, *The Gospel According to John: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1971).

¹⁷ Keener, *The Gospel of John. A Commentary Vol 1*. 942

¹⁸ Imawan Sukidi, *The Inclusive Theology of Cak Nur* (Jakarta: Kompas, 2001).

¹⁹ R Dixon, "Tafsiran Kisah Para Rasul," *Malang: Gandum Mas*, 2005.

²⁰ Peter H Davids, "Ucapan Yang Sulit Dalam Perjanjian Baru," *Malang: SAAT*, 2001.

²¹ Peter healed the crippled man who sat at the door of the Temple in Jerusalem merely by saying, "By the name of Jesus Christ, the Man of Nazareth, walk". Immediately, the legs and eyes of the man were strong and he jumped to his feet and walked. Packer and Oden, *One Faith: The Evangelical Consensus*, 102.

of salvation in evangelism, i.e., believe or miss out on salvation. Dunn sees this verse as a formula that refers to divine sovereignty that characterizes the theology of Luke (Acts 1:16, 21; Lk 2:23, 3:18-21), where Jesus is seen as central to God's universal salvation.²² In other words, in this text, Jesus is confessed to be the Savior for all the world.

One can say that the passages that seem exclusive in the Bible are more often a statement of faith of each person based on the personal experience of his or her faith in God. Such faith is born of a direct personal encounter with God. In those encounters, people feel the presence of God. It is important to note that the main locus of religion is personal. When meeting with people who embrace other faiths or religious traditions, it can be seen that the faith they embrace is expressed through their lives. Thus, what is most important is not the teachings or rites but faith. Faith is subjective and can not be easily understood by those who are outside the faith.

Based on the interpretation of the contexts of Jhn 14:6 and Acts 4:12, it can be said that those words occur as a response to the threats of the Jewish leaders and the Jewish Council toward the disciples of Jesus because of their faith. In that context, they confess their faith in Jesus because, as disciples of Jesus, they believe that Jesus is the way to salvation. In other words, when their faith identity is questioned by Jewish religious leaders who threaten to make them leave their faith, the disciples of Jesus firmly defend their faith. Thus, the two passages are specifically expressed in the midst of threats to force them to leave their faith, not primarily as a basis for the claim that there is no salvation in other religions.

The Qur'an Texts Explained

1. Surah Ali Imran [3]:19, "*Innad diina 'indallaahil islaamu...*" (The religion [which is true] before Allah is Islam...)

In interpreting the text in Surah Ali Imran [3]:19, Khalif Muammar A. Harris criticizes pluralists who interpret the expression of al-Islam only based on assumptions. According to Harris, the words of *dinan* in the verse explain that the term *al-Islam* meant in this verse is the name of a religion revealed by Allah. Then, it is impossible to be replaced by *aslama*, the verb meaning surrender, because the word *al-Islam* has been bound by the word *dinan*.²³ Harris further says, "God will not accept religions other than Islam". Harris bases his views on Surah al-Ma'idah 5:3, which reads, "On this day I have perfected for you your religion, and I have given you My favor, and I have desired Islam to be a religion for you..." Starting from sura al-Ma'idah 5:3, Harris states that *al-Islam* is the name for the religion that has been instituted by Allah. According to Harris, the important thing is not submission and obedience but true compliance, and this is not realized in religions other than Islam.²⁴ Quoting the view of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, Harris argues that, "Islam (*din al-Islam*) is a creation of Allah. Allah is the one who made it and formed it".²⁵ Harris came to the conclusion that the term *din-al-Islam* should not be used superficially as a general word that may also refer to Judaism and Christianity.²⁶ Based on Harris's view, it can be said that according to him, Islam is the only true religion because it was created by Allah. That means that any religion other than Islam is heretical. This model of interpretation is literal and can cause hatred towards non-Islamic religions.

A contextual and comprehensive interpretation is delivered by Hamka. According to Hamka, the word *ad-Din* is commonly translated into Indonesian with *agama* or *igama*, while the meaning of *ad-Din* according to the original Arabic is *tha'at*, meaning submission and recompense. Furthermore, Hamka reveals that the word *Islam* is *mashdar*. If it is the *fi'il madhi* (deeds), then it becomes *aslama*, and means surrender.²⁷ Starting from this understanding, Hamka insists that true religion on the side of God is to surrender to Him alone. If not then it is not religion. From Adam to Muhammad, including Moses and Isa, Hamka continues, that all prophets invite people to Islam, i.e., to surrender sincerely to

²² James D.G. Dunn, *Epworth Commentaries, The Acts of Apostles* (Peterborough, London: Epworth Press, 1996).

²³ Khalif Muammar A. Harris, *Islam Dan Pluralisme Agama: Memperkukuh Tauhid Pada Zaman Kekeliruan* (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2015).

²⁴ Harris, *Islam dan Pluralisme Agama*, 58.

²⁵ Harris, *Islam dan Pluralisme Agama*, 59.

²⁶ Harris, *Islam dan Pluralisme Agama*, 60.

²⁷ Hamka, *Al-Azhar Interpretation*, 3rd ed., vol. 2 (Singapore: Kyodo Printing Co., , 1990).

God and trust in Him alone. That is Islam. The *shari'a* of the prophets may change due to the changing times and places, but the nature of the religion they carry is only one: Islam.²⁸ Furthermore, Hamka says:

Therefore it can be asserted that, although he acknowledges that Muslims, the descendants of Islam, the mother and father of Islam, live within the land of Islam, if his or her mind and heart are unclean from other influences, besides Allah, it is not according to the name he uses with the real essence... [T]his kind of people may all have belonged to the Islamic group in the calculations (statistics) and in geography (earth sciences) but not necessarily that his own soul is a Muslim who surrendered to Allah.²⁹

Based on this interpretation, it is clear that the only recognized religion of Allah is Islam. Islam as meant here is to surrender solemnly to the one God, to uphold His commandments, and to be humble to Him, even though there are differences between some religious duties. What is interesting about Hamka's interpretation is that all humans who have surrendered themselves to the one God have no other fellowship with Him, even though they embrace another religion, and have attained Islam.

The same view has been conveyed by Syafa'atun Almirzanah in his lecture on Islamic and Christian relations in Indonesia from an Islamic perspective, saying, the word 'islam' or 'al-islam' has a neutral and positive meaning that could be applied to any person who obeys and surrenders to the God that he worships. As said by Syafa'atun Almirzanah, a lecturer at UIN Sunan Kalidjaga, every man who turns to God in earnest can be classified as islam (with a lowercase letter), even if that person is a follower of another religion.³⁰ In other words, any person of any religion who submits solemnly to one God and obeys God's commandments is islam. Furthermore, Syafa'atun Almirzanah emphasizes that it is necessary to have the courage to be open to others and to walk together with them. The openness described here is that in which people study to get to know one another both as individuals and as those with communal responsibility.³¹

More firmly, M. Quraish Shihab, when he interprets the text of Imran (3):19 says submission and obedience to Him, the Mighty, the Wise is an unquestionable necessity. If it is, then only islam is the complete surrender to God that is acknowledged and accepted from His side. Religion or obedience to Him is characterized by an absolute surrender to Allah Almighty. Islam in the sense of "surrender" is the essence set by God and taught by prophets, from the prophet Adam until the Prophet Muhammad.³²

Based on the interpretation of M. Quraish Shihab, it is clear that islam is a complete surrender to God in which people are received by His side. Quoting Ibn Kathir, M. Quraish Shihab says that this verse contains a message from Allah saying that there is no religion on His side from which a person is accepted, except Islam, as followed by the prophets whom He sent continually until ending with Muhammad.³³ A similar view is shared by Teungku Muhammad Hasbi ash-Shiddieqy, who says, "Indeed, all the religions and all the Shari'a brought by the prophets, its spirit is Islam: obedience, submissive, peaceful, God-fearing, and fair in all problems, although some works differ from one other. Islam is the one that the prophets gave to His people to color their lives. So, true Muslims are Muslims whose belief is free from the practice (belief) of *shirk* (idolatry), and sincerely in carrying out all deeds based on strong faith".³⁴

2. Surah Ali Imran (3):85 "*Wa may yabtaghi ghairal islaami diinan falay yuqbalah minhu. Wa huwa fil aa-khirti minal khaasiriin*", meaning that whoever seeks a religion other than Islam will not be

²⁸Hamka, *Al-Azhar Interpretation*, 733.

²⁹Hamka, *Al-Azhar Interpretation*, 733.

³⁰Syafa'atun Almirzanah, *Hubungan Islam Dan Kristen Di Indonesia, Perspektif Islam, Ceramah Dalam Lokakarya : Hubungan Islam-Kristen, Di Balewiyata Malang: Pada Hari Sabtu*, 2009.

³¹Syafa'atun Almirzanah, *Hubungan Islam dan Kristen di Indonesia*, 51

³²M. Quraish Shihab, *Al-Mishbah, Tafsir Al-Qur'an, Vol. 2, Surah Ali Imran, Surah An Nisa*, (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, Jl. Ir, H. Djuanda 166 Ciputat, , 2000).

³³Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah, Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*, 38.

³⁴Teungku Muhammad Hasbi ash-Shiddieqy, *Tafsir Al-Qur'anul Majid An Nuur, Suah 1-4*, (Jakarta: PT Pustaka Rizki Putra, 2000).

acceptable and in the end, they will be the losers. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia interprets this verse as follows:

Allah decides that whoever seeks a religion other than Islam or is unwilling to submit to the provisions of God, then his faith will not be accepted by God. For example, the polytheists and those who profess the religion of monotheism are alleged to associate with Allah, like the Christian scribe who fails to bring his followers into the hands of God. This kind of religion is merely a tradition, that can not bring benefits for their adherents, or even may drag them into the valley of destruction and become a source of enmity among the people of the world, and be their cause of repentance in the Hereafter.³⁵

In this interpretation, the interpreter has clearly labeled the scribes of other religions as idolaters, because they have not succeeded in bringing their followers under the rule of God. The faith of such men is not accepted by God. It is clear that adherents of religions other than Islam are idolaters and not accepted by God. This model of interpretation will cause hatred and conflict in society.

A more contextual and comprehensive interpretation is given by M. Quraish Shihab. He interprets Surah Ali Imran (3):85 as follows:

Whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, that is, obedience to Allah includes obedience to the established Shari'a, whose core is faith in his unity, trusting the apostles, following and supporting them, submitting and also bearing of the provisions, in relation to the universe, which in essence is the harmonization of self with all the creatures in the system it sets, it will never be accepted from it in this life of the world, then the religion will not be accepted from him. As for that person, if in this world he is not obedient until his death – then in the Hereafter, he is the one who loses, even though the deeds are good and beneficial to humans.³⁶

M. Quraish Shihab explicitly gives an explanation of the meaning of Islam as a surrender to God that includes obedience to the Shari'ah that God has established. In other words, Islam which Shihab means here is not primarily institutional as a religion, but obedience and submission to God. In another part of his book, Shihab writes, "This (surrender) is a challenge for living a sincere faith, and the Qur'an itself shows that it is not only intended for Muslims but for all those who believe in God throughout the history of mankind".³⁷

A comprehensive view is conveyed by Hamka. According to him, true religion is to surrender to God, not branching out to others. Those who have reached that stage of submission, regardless of what nation they come from, have in that moment of surrender attained Islam.³⁸ Based on this understanding, Hamka asserts that all those who no longer surrender to Allah, even though they use the name of Islam, when in fact they are far from surrendering to Allah, maybe in much more danger in the afterlife. They fail by wearing the name of Islam when they are actually polytheists. Hamka criticizes people who pray five times but are not aware of the need to surrender, and thus their religion is merely a dead gesture. Hamka insists that religion should not be a tool to achieve worldly desires or fulfill some kind of national myth. Religion like this will only bring increasing darkness of the soul, and enhance the rise of fanatic groups. People like that, continues Hamka, have become lost in the world. They are lost, and in the Hereafter they will be more lost. In contrast, according to Hamka, the person who cleans the soul from other influences and is sincere and trustworthy is practicing Islam.³⁹

Based on these interpretations, it is clear that the models of the interpretation of Harris and the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs are literal. They emphasize the expression of *al Islam* as a religious institution rather than focusing on the meaning of *al Islam* itself. On the contrary, I agree with Hamka, Syafa'atun Almirzanah, M. Quraish Shihab and Teungku Muhammad Hasbi ash-Shiddieqy, who say that the spirit of all religions is in Islam that is obedient, submissive, peaceful,

³⁵ Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, *The Qur'an and Its Interpretation* (Yogyakarta: Universitas Islam Indonesia, 1991).624,625.

³⁶ Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, 133, 134.

³⁷ Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, 103.

³⁸ Hamka, *Al-Azhar Interpretation*, 827.

³⁹ Hamka, *Al-Azhar Interpretation*, 828.

God-fearing, and fair in facing all problems. In other words, regardless of whatever religion is adhered to, what is demanded is obedience, submission, peacefulness, fear of God and fairness when facing problems. Thus, the term *al Islam* has a broad meaning that includes all religious people who are obedient and submissive to God. It means that every religion that teaches obedience and encourages submission and surrender to God will be accepted by God. They are of Islam. In this connection, this researcher agrees with Cak Nur that a lifestyle of subservience, submission and surrender is the meeting point of all correct teaching religions.⁴⁰

Christianity also has teachings that invite people to obey and submit to God. In Christianity, the attitude of obedience, submission and surrender to God is required of each of His people. For example, in the book of Exodus, God says, "... if you will diligently obey my voice and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine" (Ex. 19:5). In this text, "hear the word" and "stick to the agreements" describe a heart obedient to God.

An obedient heart is a heart that is given by God to his people. Through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord said, "... I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ez. 36:26). In Paul's letter to the Romans, he was grateful because, in the past, the people of the Roman church lived in sin, but then they obeyed the instructions that had been forwarded to them (Rom. 6:17). In the letter of Peter, the author encourages his congregation, who have already purified themselves by obeying the truth, to adopt a sincere mutual love (1 Petr. 1:22). In his letter to the congregation in Philippi, Paul invites his congregation to obey the Lord, as Jesus Himself, in His ministry, was obedient unto death, even death on the cross (Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8). It means that obedience and submission to God and His Word are charged to Christians as well.

Thus, there should be no reason for people of either religion (Islam or Christianity) to use hate speech and attack one another. Because they are both Islam, the adherents of obedience and submission worship the one God who is the Lord for all people. As Islam, they should live together in harmonious relationships. In order to strengthen a harmonious life, this study proposes a comprehensive reading and understanding of the Bible and the Qur'an.

Reading and Understanding the Bible and the Qur'an Comprehensively

Here, this study proposes a comprehensive reading and understanding of the Bible and the Qur'an because there are some inclusive passages that can be used as a basis to maintain harmony. In the Bible, the psalmist says, "The Lord is good to everyone and full of grace to all that He has made" (Ps.145:9). These words are part of the praise that David offers to God. In David's experience, God is not only good to the people of Israel, but he is also good to everyone outside of Israel. He is good to all people of different ethnic backgrounds and different religions, even "full of grace toward all that He created".⁴¹ Why is that? Because "everything is His creation". That is why He makes His sun shine on everyone and sends rain on the just and the unjust alike (Mt. 5:45). He also sustains all humans by giving sowing and harvest seasons. Whatever their religion or their behavior, God gives His blessing for all people because all of them are His creation (Psalm145:9b). The words of the psalmist function as a breakthrough to remove all obstacles that hinder the way for others and, like a hammer destroy the walls of separation that have been built by people against their neighbors from different ethnicities, religions and beliefs. In this understanding, Paul also said, "There is no difference between Jews and Greeks. Because the same Lord is the Lord for all, is rich to all who call upon him" (Rm. 10:12). From the words of Paul, it is clearly the reality that the same Lord is the Lord of all people. It is not the Lord of Israel alone but also of all the people who inhabit this earth.⁴² At the time of Jesus, the Pharisees set up walls of separation between Jews and Gentiles. Therefore, they condemned Jesus for sitting and eating with sinners and tax collectors (Lk 15:2, 7:34). They also did not want to practice hospitality

⁴⁰ Sukidi, *Inclusive Theology*, 17, 18.

⁴¹ Jan S. Aritonang and Gomar Gultom, *Tuhan Itu Baik Bagi Semua Orang, Hasil Konferensi Gereja Dan Masyarakat PGI, 17-21 November 2008* (Jakarta: Persekutuan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia, 2008).

⁴² M.K. Sembiring and Bryan D. Hinton, " Pedoman Penafsiran Alkitab, Surat Paulus Kepada Jemaat Di Roma," in *A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Romans*, ed. Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida (Jakarta: Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia, Yayasan Karunia Bakti Budaya Indonesia, 2012), 224.

with Samaritans because they were considered infidels. Even going into the house of a Gentile was prohibited.

However, in contrast to the pious Jews, Jesus opposed the exclusive attitude and displayed an inclusive attitude. Jesus opened Himself up to all people of different ethnic backgrounds and different beliefs. He ate with tax collectors and sinners (Mt. 9:9-13; Lk 19:1-10). Therefore, he was labeled as a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners (Lk 7:34). But Jesus ignored that negative stamp because his mission was to save sinners. Jesus said, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save sinners". In this text, Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of Man who came to save the lost from God because of sin.

John reports that Jesus went into the region of the Samaritans and lived with them for two days (Jhn 4:40). This action of Jesus was despised by the Pharisees. However, he dared to cross the line drawn by the Pharisees causing them not to be friendly with the Samaritans (Jhn 4:9) because they were considered infidels and unclean. Jesus also dared to penetrate the territorial boundaries of a nation and enter other nations to help people in distress. In the story of Jesus' encounter with the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mk 7:24-30; Mt. 5:21-28), Jesus left Palestine and went to the region of Tyre and entered a house. There, he did not want anyone to know of his presence. Jesus' action was seen by the Pharisees as an offense because, in the Jewish tradition, there was a ban on associating with Gentiles or entering their houses (ref. Acts 10:28). But he ignored the ban for the sake of an encounter with people of different nationalities and religions, in order to help them. Jesus' action shows an attitude that is open to people of all ethnicities and religions.

God Himself orders an attitude of openness. Through His Spirit, He told Peter to go to Caesarea to meet Cornelius (Acts 10:19-20). Earlier, Peter had refused the order because, in the Jewish tradition, there was a prohibition against Jews entering the house of a Gentile. But, because God ordered Peter through the Holy Spirit, he ignored the ban and went with three delegates of Cornelius to Joppa in order to meet with Cornelius. In that encounter, Peter said, "You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile, but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean. So, when I was sent for, I came without objection" (Acts 10:28-29).

The openness of Jesus and Peter and the openness of God are concrete examples that must be exemplary for Christians, in order to build dialogue with adherents of other religions. By an attitude of openness, doors that had been closed will be opened and men will be allowed to carry out a mutual dialogue with their neighbors of different religions in an atmosphere of harmony and peace. Thus, there should be no reason to shut oneself up against his/her neighbors of different ethnicity or religion.

In the Qur'an, it is said, "Verily the believers, Jews, Christians, and Shabiin, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, and do good deeds, they will receive reward from God, there is no concern for them, nor are they saddened" (Surah Al-Baqarah [2]:62; Al-Ma'ida [5]:69). This text clearly guarantees that all the groups mentioned in this verse receive salvation from Allah if they believe in Allah and do good deeds.⁴³

Coexistence in diversity is also emphasized in the Qur'an. It says, "If Allah wants, He will create humans as one monolithic nation. But they always show differences" (QS Al-Ma'idah [5]:48; Hud [11]:118; Al-Nahl [16]:93). From these passages, it is clear that God calls for those differences and guarantees salvation for all groups mentioned in this text. The differences between humans foster mutually complementary and enriching behaviours. Indeed, the differences sometimes disturb the atmosphere and lead to conflict. Ironically, the religious sacred text is used to legitimate the conflict, even though the difference is something natural that cannot be avoided.

Therefore, the recognition of the existence of different religions should be welcomed gracefully so that there is no coercion of people of one religion to convert to those of another religion. In the Qur'an, God says, "Let there be no compulsion in religion (Islam) ..." (Qur'an, Al-Baqarah 2:256). In another surah, God also asserts, "To you then be your way (religion) and to me mine (religion)" (QS., 109:6).⁴⁴ This verse emphasizes the Islamic doctrine of pluralism and proves that Islam is inclusive.

⁴³ Alwi Shihab, *Islam Inklusif, Menuju Sikap Terbuka Dalam Beragama* (Bandung: AN Teve, Penerbit Mizan, 1997).

⁴⁴ Sukidi, *Inclusive Theology*, 4.

Based on the exploration of these inclusive texts, it can be seen that in the Bible and the Qur'an, there are not only verses that are considered exclusive but there are also verses that are inclusive. Hence, there is a need to read the Bible and the Qur'an comprehensively. By doing so, harmonious living can be maintained and mission to the other can be done in peace. It is true that reading the sacred texts of the Bible and the Qur'an is not without challenges from both Christian⁴⁵ and Muslim⁴⁶ sides, especially from hard-line groups who use the sacred texts to achieve certain purposes. Therefore, mutual dialogue needs to be carried out continuously to reach a better understanding so that the adherents of the two religions can live together in harmony.

Equal dialogues are dialogues that are carried out in the spirit of equality, sincerely and peacefully, in order to learn from other religions. All parties from different religions come to dialogue not with the intention of showing off their religious superiority or to degrade the faith of their fellow dialogue companions, but instead, patiently and humbly they listen to each other.

Equal dialogue is needed because Indonesia is a nation that has a pluralist society, in terms of custom, tradition, culture, ethnicity, and religion. This plurality encourages the followers of the religions in Indonesia not just to focus on efforts to understand the doctrine of their own religion but also to understand the doctrines of others. The doctrine of one religion, indeed, is different from others but besides that there are similarities. Therefore, a need for dialogue and cooperation with other religions is necessary. The dialogue that is meant here, as described by Bosch, is "a dialogue in a meeting of hearts rather than of minds". In this dialogue, the coexistence of different faiths with willingness is accepted.⁴⁷ In the dialogue, adherents witness their deepest convictions, while listening to those of their neighbors.

The Dialogue of Life as a Way to Live Together in Harmony

The form of dialogue that this study proposes to be fostered in Indonesia is the dialogue of life for community members living together in a single environment, without distinction of race and religion. In everyday life, inter-religious encounter is inevitable. That encounter could happen in community activities such as mutual help to clean the gutters and the local village environment, doing activities in celebration of feast days such as National Independence Day, etc. Community activities are carried out without distinguishing ethnic and religious identity.⁴⁸ In this situation, people from both Muslim and Christian backgrounds help each other in religious activities. For example, after the riots that took place in Ambon, there was a new way of life experienced by the community because the dialogue of life began to be built. In organizing the Musabaqah Tilawatil Qur'an (MTQ) and Ecclesiastical Choir Party (Pesparawi) in Ambon, Islamic and Christian communities supported one another. In connection with these two important events, the moderator of MUI Maluku, Ustadz K. Toekan, said that, "In the implementation of MTQ 2012 in the city of Ambon, all Christians gave outstanding support to the caravan that was present in Ambon by cleaning up the environment, decorating the city with bright colors, and providing a place for the caravan. Even the Christian University of Indonesia in the Moluccas (UKIM) willingly provided a place for the performance of one of the races. Without the support of Christian communities in the Moluccas, Toekan continued, the MTQ would not have succeeded. MTQ and its implementation were very successful. The implementation of the National Pesparawi XI also must be successful and the MUI of Maluku strongly supports it." He hoped that the successful implementation of Pesparawi until its completion would strengthen the fellowship of all peoples in the Moluccas.⁴⁹

In the course of MTQ, Christians participate starting from its preparation to its celebration. Meanwhile, during the Church Choir Festival, (Pesta Paduan Suara Gerejawi, or Pesparawi), Muslims also participate, and likewise, on Christmas Day the Muslim youth maintain the security of the Christian neighborhoods.

⁴⁵ <http://gbikapernaumjembrana.blogspot.co.id/2015/07/bahaya-pluralisme-ber.html>

⁴⁶ <https://muslim.or.id/9474-pluralisme-agama-trend-pemikiran-semua-agama-adalah-sama.html>

⁴⁷ David, J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, vol. 16 (New York: Orbis books, 2011).

⁴⁸ Mun'im A. Sirry, "Fiqh Lintas Agama, Membangun Masyarakat Inklusif-Pluralis," n.d. 208, 209.

⁴⁹ <http://ambonekspres.com/2015/10/07/damai-dalam-pesparawi/>

In Malang, the East Java Christian Church (GKJW) regularly holds live-ins together with people of other faiths. Church leaders invite Muslim leaders to live in sometimes together with Christian leaders for dialogue. They build a relationship on an ongoing basis, conducting workshops on certain themes, cooperating in the economic development of the people, and acting persuasively as early as possible in case of issues of ethnicity, race, or religious strife. They build an understanding of solidarity among members of society, especially among youth, parents, religious leaders, teachers, clergy, and intellectuals, by holding joint social actions. Such activities will further strengthen the relations between Islam and Christianity, especially in Indonesia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are provided:

First, a contextual understanding of the texts in the Bible and the Qur'an is needed so that adherents to both religions can understand the exact meaning of the texts. This researcher believes that such practices will prevent feelings of hatred and mutual hostility. It would be false to say that by understanding the Bible and the Qur'an contextually there will be no more tensions and conflicts between religions in Indonesia. Tensions and conflicts can happen at any time, but at least the way the Bible and the Qur'an are read can reduce the tension and conflict in Indonesian society.

Second, reading the Bible and the Qur'an only as isolated passages, without relating the texts read to other texts that are inclusive, will lead to an exclusive understanding. Therefore, the Bible and the Qur'an need to be read and understood comprehensively, because the researcher believes that in both these holy scriptures there are many texts that are inclusive. These texts can be used as a basis for giving enlightenment to adherents of religions in order to live together in harmony, especially in Indonesia.

Third, the dialogue of life needs to be carried out in every community, especially in Indonesia, because in Indonesian society there are various religious followers living together. Through the dialogue of life, every believer of religion can understand the character and sensitivity of each adherent of other religions. Therefore, the dialogue of life is one of the efforts to strengthen the relationship between adherents of religions and to prevent tensions and conflicts between people of different religions in one community so as to create a harmonious life together.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it is evident that the understanding of certain texts in the Bible and the Qur'an exclusively, with the content of certain ethnic, social, political, and economic interests, as an absolute truth, imposed on people of other religious groups, can cause unnecessary clashes between religious groups in society. In order to avoid clashes that destroy peaceful coexistence, it is necessary to comprehensively and deeply understand the sacred texts in the Bible and the Qur'an and to understand the texts and the context and spiritual meaning of them, without including certain content of interests imposed on others as an absolute truth. This is because every religion has sacred texts that are claimed to be the truth for its adherents for the realization of friendship, welfare, and salvation for all mankind.

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