Methods of Religious Leaders in Enhancing Interfaith Harmony:
Cases of Muslims, Protestants, Christians, and Hindus in Malang, Indonesia

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Abstract.
Social and political considerations are insufficient foundations for building religious harmony because conflicts continue. Activities to increase religious harmony require a stronger foundation than a social and political nature. This research explores the methods of religious leaders in Malang to increase religious harmony. Data sources are interviews, documents, and active participation. Researchers interviewed eight religious leaders representing the four religions studied: Islam, Protestantism, Christianity, and Hinduism. The research results show that (1) religious leaders use four ways to increase religious harmony. Namely, (a) providing a theological foundation based on holy verses, (b) interpreting exclusive verses to provide inclusive understanding, (c) giving new meaning to the concept of da'wah and creating harmonious forums, (d) carrying out live activities in and culture. (2) this research found three methods of interpreting exclusive verses: privatization, hermeneutics, and proportional. Based on these results, this research recommends three things. (1) religious leaders must disseminate theological understanding to strengthen religious harmony. (2) The three methods of interpreting the exclusive verses above can be alternative models in interpreting the holy scriptures. (3) religious communities must carry out live-ins frequently to foster mutual trust.
Keywords: religious harmony, exclusive, inclusive, *live-in*, interpretation model, theological foundation.

1. Introduction.

Religious harmony is one of the critical issues in Indonesia because this harmony determines the nation's survival. Without religious harmony, the Indonesian nation, which consists of many religions, will collapse. Apart from that, religious harmony is also essential to face the emergence of exclusionary attitudes and violence in the name of religion. Research by Hakim, Jakobsen, Largen, and Sennett shows that communication and religious harmony can effectively reduce the emergence of exclusive attitudes and violence in the name of religion (Dhikrul Hakim, 2019; Jakobsen, 2019; Largen, 2020; Sennett, 2021).

Historically, religious harmony emerged in Europe in 1930, and this concept emerged based on political considerations, namely so that minority Protestant citizens could get equal rights after oppression from the Christian majority (Greenberg, 2019). The rationale for guaranteeing religious rights and individual freedom is also the basis for religious harmony movements in Malaysia and India (Hilmi et al., 2019; Rahaman, 2017). Farid Esack (b. 1955), a religious cooperation activist from South Africa, stated that religious harmony based on political considerations is not vital. Because quite a few people who collaborate with people of other religions still do not abandon their sense of superiority in their faith and reject all forms of salvation from different religions. Esack's statement shows that religious harmony requires arguments other than political and social interests to become strong (Esack, 1998).

Many studies examine the relations between religious communities, especially Muslims and Christians. However, more research needs to be conducted to explore strengthening religious harmony and involve several religious communities at once. Researchers only found

a few articles, including (1) research by Zawawi, Kruja, and Toby Khan on strengthening religious harmony in Malaysia, Albania, and Egypt (Kan, 2023; Kruja, 2022; Mohd Zawawi et al., 2020). (2) Hamza's research on the methods of religious leaders in Kenya in overcoming religious violence (Hamza et al., 2019). (3) Gede Agung's research on inter-religious communication methods based on local wisdom (Gede Agung et al., 2024). Specifically for research in Indonesia, researchers only found a few articles. Among other things, (1) Soleh and Rahmawati's research on strengthening harmony between Muslims, Buddhists, and Confucians in Malang, Indonesia (Soleh & Rahmawati, 2022). (2) Mamahit's research on strengthening relations between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia (Mamahit, 2021). (3) Nur Rahman's research on strengthening harmony between Muslims and Hindus in Tengger, East Java (Dicky Nur Rahman et al., 2023).

This description shows that more research is needed to examine methods for strengthening religious harmony. This article aims to fill this gap. This research explores various methods of religious leaders in Malang to strengthen religious harmony, especially between Muslims, Protestants, Christians, and Hindus. This research can provide two benefits. (1) Practically, the methods of religious leaders in strengthening religious harmony can be adopted and used in other places. (2) academically, scholars can analyse the methods of religious leaders in strengthening religious harmony in science.

2. Literature Review.
2.1. Religious Attitude.

Alwi Shihab stated that, in general, there are three models of relational attitudes in religion, namely exclusive, inclusive, and pluralist (Shihab, 2001). Exclusive is an attitude that claims that truth only exists in one's faith. In religious scriptures, some verses can encourage exclusive attitudes. For example, Christians have the terms "Extra ecclesiam nulla Salus" and "No Other Name" (Munawar-Rahman, 2001). In Islam, there is a verse, "Whoever accepts a religion other than Islam will not be accepted and on the last day he will be among the losers" (al-Maidah: 3) and "Indeed, the religion with Allah is Islam" (Ali-Imran: 85).

There are two forms of this exclusive attitude, namely *ignorant* and *independent*. Ignorant is an attitude where religious people walk alone without caring about other people. At the same time, independence is an attitude in which each religious community knows the existence of other religious people but doesn't know each other. A Protestant leader, Sri Wismoady Wahono (1944-2002), stated that these two attitudes were inadequate to strengthen religious harmony (Wiyata, 2006).

Inclusiveness is an attitude that believes there is salvation in other religions, but the standard of truth is within one's faith. Karl Rahner (1904-1984) introduced the Anonymous Christian term in Christianity (Hicks, 1995). Muslims also know the terms non-Muslim par excellence and Muslim par excellence (Munawar-Rahman, 2001). There are two forms of this inclusive attitude, namely apologetic and tolerant. Apologetics is an attitude where each religious community knows and interacts with each other but tends to show their respective differences and strengths so that it cannot strengthen religious harmony. Tolerance is an attitude where religious people can accept the presence of people of other religions but only in social aspects (Wiyata, 2006). Farid Esack stated that social interests are not vital enough to build religious harmony because they do not abandon their sense of superiority in their religion and do not accept any form of salvation from other spiritual concepts (Esack, 1998). Soleh and Rahmawati's research show that religious harmony requires foundations that are not only social (Soleh & Rahmawati, 2021).

Pluralism is an attitude that believes that each religion has its truth and path to salvation so that no one has the right to claim that their religion is true (Lyden, 1995). John Hicks expresses this paradigm with the expression "other religions are equally valid ways to the same

truth," John B. Cobb Jr conveys it with the term "other religions speak of different but equally valid truths," while Raimundo Panikkar uses the term "each religion expresses an important part of the truth" (Munawar-Rahman, 2001). Sri Wismoady Wahono (1944-2002) called this attitude *pro-existence*, namely the awareness that life is not for one's religion but for life with adherents of other religions (Wiyata, 2006).

2.2. Religious Harmony.

Van Wiele stated that there needs to be a change in attitude to strengthen religious harmony:

a. The exclusive attitude towards religion must change to be inclusive so that each member of the religion can understand and accept the presence of members of other religions (Callaway, 2010; Nes-Visscher, 2013; Van Wiele, 2005).
b. Religious communities must carry out intense communication and dialogue between religions so that openness and mutual trust emerge between them (D'Costa, 2008; "Inter-Religious Dialog Now and Then in West Java," 2021; Renkema et al., 2019).
c. Religious communities must intensively collaborate with followers of other religions to create a sense of togetherness (Bhayat, 2018; Kagimu et al., 2011; Levy & Razin, 2012; Lyck-Bowen & Owen, 2019).

Several forms of religious dialogue. Among other things, the *first* is parliamentary dialogue, which involves many participants from various religions. In this dialogue model, participants focus on creating and developing better cooperation while promoting peace among religious adherents. *Second* is institutional dialogue, namely dialogue by representatives of various religious institutions such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Indonesian Church Association (PGI), and Jawi Wetan Christian Church (GKJW). *Third* is theological dialogue, which discusses theological and philosophical issues in religion. Religious and intellectual leaders usually carry out this third type of dialogue (Azra, 1999).

Several attitudes can hinder religious harmony dialogue. Among other things, *first*, the fanaticism of each religion's followers so that there continues to be suspicion towards people of other religions. *Second*, more robust enthusiasm must be encouraged to fight for dialogue and religious harmony. *Third*, there is a gap between religious elite groups and the lower classes of society so that communication and efforts for harmony are more elitist and discourse. *Fourth*, no info needs to lecture supports the implementation of communication between religious communities (Aina Tuan Mohd Zawawi et al., 2020; Et. al., 2021; Wombwell et al., 2015).

3. Methods.

The research focuses on analysing the efforts of religious leaders in Malang Raya to increase religious harmony, namely Muslims, Protestants, Christians, and Hindus. Researchers have several reasons for choosing these four religious leaders as research subjects. (1) Islam is the majority religion that dominates society in Malang, so their attitudes and thoughts greatly determine religious harmony in Malang. (2) Hindus are a minority religion, but their existence is prominent in Malang's religious relations. In addition, there is not much research that examines them as minorities. (3) Protestantism and Christianity are religions with an intermediate population between Islam and Hinduism. These two religions can be a balance between the majority and minorities.

The research data sources are the results of interviews, documents, and active participation. Researchers interviewed eight religious leaders in Malang, namely Muslims, Protestants, Christians and Hindus. Researchers chose them purposively for three important reasons: (1) they came from social, religious institutions originating from each religion so they could represent their religion; (2) they often carry out dialogue activities between religious

communities; (3) they are recommended by their religious, social institution so that their opinions can represent the official opinion of their religious group.

Document data from each religion's holy books, interpretations of these holy verses, and written ulama fatwas. Other written rules, such as the yellow book in Islam, fall into this category. Researchers are also active in religious harmony activities. Several times, the researcher attended meetings involving interfaith leaders. Apart from that, researchers also visited places of worship of other religions and paid attention to their religious ritual activities. At other times, researchers invited followers of other religions to their homes to establish religious harmony.

Meanwhile, Greater Malang, the object of this research, is located in East Java, Indonesia. The Greater Malang region comprises three government administrations: Malang City, Malang Regency, and Batu City. Six religions are proliferating in the Malang area, namely Islam as the majority religion, followed by Protestantism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Religious leaders must manage this religion's rapid development and strengthen religious harmony by establishing communication between them. If not, this religion's development could lead to religious disaster.

The following is data on religious adherents in Malang, including Muslims, Protestant, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and Confucians (*Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia*, 2023).

Figure 1: Demographics of Religious Adherents in Malang 2023.

No		Malang City	Malang Regency	Batu City	Amount	%
1	Muslims	797.022	2.876.940	209.479	3.673.962	95,25
2	Protestant	47.393	66.816	8.351	114.209	2,96
3	Christians	30.705	15.264	2.891	48.860	1,27
4	Hindus	1.279	11.039	414	12.732	0,33
5	Buddhists	3.847	2.517	588	6.952	0,18
6	Confucians	209	66	5	280	0,01
		880.455	2.954.861	221.728	3.856.995	100

4. Results.

This section explains the efforts of religious leaders in Malang to increase religious harmony. Namely, providing a theological basis, reinterpreting exclusive verses, giving new meaning to da'wah, and carrying out live-in and culture.

4.1. Theological Basis.

Providing a theological basis is providing a theological understanding for strengthening religious harmony. Religious leaders provide this theological understanding by referring to religious holy verses. According to them, strengthening religious harmony by providing a theological basis is more robust than other methods because it relates to religious beliefs. Previously, religious harmony activities used sociological and humanitarian interests as a basis, not religious beliefs. Their religious beliefs are exclusive, not inclusive, so religious harmony is not vital.

Islamic leaders CH and AH provided a theological basis by referring to Al-Qur'an surah al-Hujurat, 13. Both leaders stated that this holy verse explicitly orders Muslims to know and respect other parties, including those of different religions. Apart from that, the two leaders also used the Medina Charter, which notes that the Prophet collaborated and protected the rights of Jews and non-Muslims. Therefore, there is no reason to reject those of different religions (Interview, n.d.). Al-Qur'an 49: 13 states as follows,

"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)" (al-Hujurat, 13).

RS and DT from Protestant leaders provide a theological basis by referring to the Bible. RS refers to Matthew, chapters 5 and 22. Based on these holy verses, RS states that only God has the right to determine right and wrong in religion. Humans have no right to claim to be the owner of the truth and blame other religions. DT also refers to Matthew, chapters 22 and 25, and John chapter 4. Based on these holy verses, DT states that the concept of salvation in the Bible does not refer to a particular religion but to the behaviour of love. All religions teach the principle of love, so they also have the right to be safe (Interview, n.d.).

"But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool! ' Will be liable to the hell of fire" (Matthew, 5: 22).

"And so, we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them" (John, 4:16).

S and PM from Christian leaders provide a theological basis by referring to the Bible. S refers to many holy verses, namely Genesis chapter 1, Matthew chapters 5 and 22, Luke chapter 10, the Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965, and the document Deus Caritas Est in 2005. Based on these holy verses, S states that the Bible commands humans to love others, not only those who love us but even our enemies. If we have to love our enemies, how much less do we love other people who only have different religions? (Interview, n.d.)

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew, 5: 43-44)

Meanwhile, PM provides a theological basis by referring to Hebrews chapter 1: 1-2. According to the PM, Hebrews chapter 1, *Redemptoris Missio* number 55, the Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965, *Lumen Gentium* number 16, and *Gaudium Et Spes* number 22. Based on these holy verses, the PM stated that the emergence of human diversity, culture, and Religion manifests God's will. Therefore, we as a people are not worthy to reject, let alone be hostile to, other parties who are different, including those of different religions. Apart from that, the PM also referred to the Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965. Based on the Council, the PM stated that the Christian church does not reject anything considered true and holy in religions other than Christianity (Interview, n.d.). Specifically, regarding Religion and Muslims, the Vatican Council stated the following:

"The Church respects Muslims, who worship the only God, living and sovereign, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to humanity. The Muslims try to submit themselves with all their hearts to Allah's decrees, which are also secret, as Abraham previously submitted himself to Allah" (Vatican Council of 1962-1965).

K and IB from Hindus religious leaders provide a theological basis by referring to several holy books, namely the Bhagavad Gita, Mahabharata chapter 3, Atharvaveda chapter 12, and Yajurveda chapter 26. Based on these holy verses, K and IB state that human diversity, culture, and Religion are necessities God deliberately created. Therefore, Hinduism does not reject differences in Religion or belief; even the Bhagavad Gita explicitly states that God will accept any form of worship or Religion directed at Him and will make it stronger (Interview, n.d.).

"In whatever way people surrender unto Me, I reciprocate accordingly. Everyone follows My path, knowingly or unknowingly, O son of Pritha" (Bhagavad Gita, 4: 11).

"Whatever celestial form a devotee seeks to worship with faith, I maintain the faith of such a devotee in that form" (Bhagavad Gita, 7: 21)

The researcher summarizes the opinions of religious leaders and references to their verses in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Theological Basis.

No	Religious	Leaders	Theological Basis
1	Islamic	CH dan AH	Al-Qur'an, 49: 13. Madina Charter
2	Protestant	RS dan DT	Matthew, 5: 22 dan 43-48. Matthew, 22: 34-40. Matthew, 25: 32-40. John, 4: 16.
3	Christian	S dan PM	Genesis, 1: 26-27. Matthew, 5: 43-44 dan 46-48. Matthew, 12: 30-31. Matthew, 22: 34-40. Luke, 10: 25-37. Vatican Council, II, 1962-1965, *Nostra Aetate*. *Deus Caritas Est,* December 25, 2005. Hebrew, 1: 1-2. *Redemptoris Missio,* 55. *Lumen Gentium,* 16. *Gaudium Et Spes,* 22.
4	Hindus	K dan IB	Bhagavad Gita, 4: 11. Bhagavad Gita, 7: 21 Bhagavad Gita, 18: 41. Mahabharata, 3: 21. Atharvaveda, XII, 1: 45. Yajurveda, 36: 18.

4.2. Reinterpreting Exclusive Verses.

Religious leaders stated that religious scriptures convey inclusive verses and contain exclusive verses. In Islam, for example, there are verses "The Religion before Allah is Islam" (al-Qur'an, 3: 19) and "If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah), never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter He will be in the ranks of those who have lost (All spiritual good)" (al-Qur'an, 3: 85). In the Bible there are verses "then Jesus came to

them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew, 28: 18), and "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John, 14: 6). Some religious fundamentalists use these verses to support their exclusive thoughts and attitudes, thereby giving rise to violence in the name of religion.

Religious leaders in Malang took several steps to respond to these exclusive verses. *First*, exclusive verses should be placed in private areas and not used in social issues, especially religious relations. Instead, religious leaders provide inclusive verses on social life to support inclusive attitudes. For example, CH from Islamic religious leaders stated that the Koran 3:19 is specifically for internal Muslims and is not related to religious relations. To strengthen religious harmony, CH pointed to the teachings of the Qur'an in al-Hujurat, 13, which commands humans to get to know each other (Interview, n.d.).

Second, interpret these exclusive verses using contextual hermeneutic methods to produce inclusive understanding. For example, K, a Hindu leader, explained the Bhagavat Gita verse 4: 13 about four groups of people. K stated that this verse does not indicate the existence of caste or hierarchy in society but rather differences due to differences in quality and burden of responsibility (Interview, n.d.).

Third, link exclusive verses with inclusive verses and then interpret them in such a way as to give birth to a new, inclusive understanding. For example, DT from Protestant leaders linked the verse John 14: 6, the basis for exclusive understanding, with the verse John 4: 16, which is the basis for inclusive understanding. DT connects the two verses and provides a new interpretation, giving birth to an inclusive understanding (Interview, n.d.).

Figure 2: Exclusive Verse Interpretation Method.
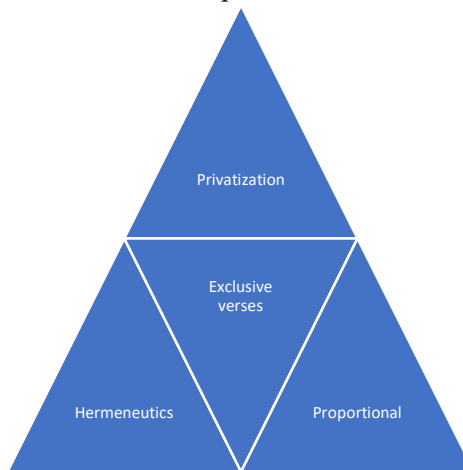
However, reinterpreting exclusive verses to create inclusive understanding and attitudes is not easy. Religious leaders stated that they faced three difficulties. (1) textually exclusive verses do show exclusive attitudes and behaviour. Providing a new interpretation that is not in line with the explicit meaning requires a strong argument. (2) exclusive verses have become the basis for carrying out exclusive and violent movements in the name of religion by certain groups. Giving different meanings to these verses means facing groups that support these exclusive verses. (3) giving an inclusive meaning to an exclusive verse is an unpopular effort and therefore requires strong commitment and massive socialization (Interview, n.d.).

4.3. The Meaning of Da'wah and Harmony Forum.

Da'wah or religious mission is usually defined as an effort to invite other parties to join our religion. Certain verses in religious scriptures do teach this. For example, the Bible conveys "He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark, 16: 15). Yajurveda also states "This holy word should be conveyed to all mankind, to Brahmins, Knights, Vaishyas, Sudras, to my people and even to foreigners." (Yajurveda, 26:2).

Religious leaders stated that so far religious da'wah or mission activities have been more expansive, namely inviting other parties or influencing adherents of other religions to join our religion. This expansive method of preaching also varies, from subtle narration to material persuasion, from friendship to trapping with marriage, from promotion to dismissal and so on. In Indonesia there is the term Christianization, namely the efforts of certain Christian missionaries to invite other parties, especially Muslim communities, to convert to Christianity. Religious leaders stated that such preaching behaviour actually creates conflict between religions, rather than strengthening relations between them.

Because of this, religious leaders stated the need to reformulate the meaning of da'wah or religious mission. According to them, da'wah activities must change from da'wah, inviting outsiders to join our religion, to da'wah which means improving society's quality. Da'wah is an effort to correct societal deficiencies and improve quality. With this understanding of da'wah, religious missionaries are more concerned with improving the quality of their society, not influencing people of other religions. This preaching behaviour will not disturb people of other religions; on the contrary, it can strengthen religious harmony. Religious leaders then disseminated this new understanding of preaching on a massive scale directly to the public and via social media (Interview, n.d.).

Apart from reformulating the meaning of da'wah, religious leaders also actively hold meetings in inter-religious harmony forums. Several forums accommodate these joint meeting activities, including the Farum for Religious Harmony (FKUM) and Inter-Religious Women (PAUB). The Indonesian government facilitates these forums for communication between religious communities. Starting in 2006, the Indonesian government even set recommendations for religious harmony as a condition for building places of worship so there would be no commotion.

4.4. *Live-in* and Cultural Development.

Live-in is an activity to directly experience the life of people of other religions by witnessing and joining in religious worship activities. Religious leaders carry out this activity by allowing participants to witness the worship activities of other religions. For example, several Muslims witnessed directly Christian and Hindu religious worship activities. On the other hand, some Christians and Hindus live together in an Islamic boarding school so they can see and experience firsthand the life of a Muslim Islamic boarding school.

Religious leaders stated that this *live-in* activity effectively established communication and openness between religious communities. Also, *live-in* activities can increase mutual trust between people of different religions. The emergence of openness and mutual trust raises awareness of the need to accept the presence of people of other religions. More than that, openness and mutual trust can give birth to a new awareness that life is not for oneself but also life together with people of other religions so that all religious people can fight together to uphold the basic principles of religious teachings, such as upholding justice and truth, or together. Together, we can overcome humanitarian problems such as ignorance. Besides going live, religious leaders in Malang also conducted intensive studies together. Muslims and Protestants, for example, carry out intensive Islamic-Christian studies called Intensive Islamic Christian Studies (SIKI). This program is national in scale and intense but limited. Each religion only sent 20 delegates. They will learn other religions from the characters directly. For

example, Protestant delegates will learn about Islamic teachings from competent Muslim leaders, and vice versa (Interview, n.d.).

Cultural development is an effort by religious leaders in Malang to strengthen religious harmony by creating songs or poems that teach religious harmony. Protestant religious leaders, for example, created *Kidung Pasamuan*, namely worship songs based on the teachings of Matthew 22: 34-40 about love.

"I love fellow humans
The beauty of brotherhood
Following God's teachings
Respect neighbours
Even though they are different religions
Different groups
But one taste
Sense of humanity
How beautiful
Uniting to build life
May you be peaceful" (Interview, n.d.).

5. Discussion.

This section discusses the results of the above research, the *first* of which concerns religious leaders providing a theological basis for increasing religious harmony. The efforts of these leaders are a new method. Previously, the government and religious leaders used arguments of social and humanitarian interests to strengthen religious harmony. Social and humanitarian arguments cannot strengthen religious relations because their beliefs and thoughts do not support this. This fact is based on Farid Esack's statement (b. 1955) that social and humanitarian arguments are not strong enough to increase religious harmony. Religious harmony requires theological arguments to be strong (Esack, 1998).

Religious leaders carry out the need to provide theological arguments to increase religious harmony in other places. Paul Payne's research shows that several Christian leaders in Russia reformulated their theological teachings to provide a basis for attitudes and thoughts of religious inclusivity. The efforts of these Christian leaders aim to strengthen religious harmony, as is done by religious leaders in Malang (Payne, 2016).

Second, about reinterpreting exclusive verses. This effort is nothing new. Several academic leaders in Indonesia have made efforts like this. For example, Nurcholish Madjid (1939-2005) once provided an inclusive interpretation of an exclusive verse, namely Al-Qur'an Surah Ali Imran 19. Madjid stated that the Islam referred to in this verse does not refer to the name of a particular religion, namely Islam, but rather to an attitude of submission and resignation. Every religion teaches these attitudes. Therefore, for every religious attitude and behaviour based on submission and surrender, Allah will recognize it, whatever the name of the religion (Madjid, 1995).

Religious leaders in Malang stated that interpreting these exclusive verses took work. Interpreting exclusive verses to provide inclusive understanding requires strong arguments, high commitment, and great courage because you will deal with fundamentalists and exclusive behaviour. However, they still do it with two beliefs. (1) that religion, in principle, teaches peace and compassion, not insults and hostility. (2) Religious differences are a blessing, so each adherent gets to know each other and competes in virtue rather than disbelieving each other. This second belief is in line with the famous statement in Islam that differences of opinion are a blessing (Interview, n.d.).

Third, it is about changing the meaning of da'wah from an expansive movement to a defensive one, from inviting people of other religions to change to improve their own people's quality. This da'wah concept aligns with Ibn Hajar al-Haitami's thoughts (1503-1566). Ibn Hajar stated that there are five pillars of Islam. However, this does not mean that those who have not implemented all of the five are not Muslims. On the other hand, whoever says the Shahada is a Muslim. They are Muslims but are not perfect because they have not implemented all the pillars of Islam. Da'wah serves to fill the deficiency. Da'wah is an activity to correct the shortcomings of one's people, not to invite people of other religions to join our religion (Ibn Hajar, 2008).

Currently, changing the meaning of preaching from offensive to defensive and changing the meaning of inviting other parties to improve their people is a necessity. Nes-Visscher's research states that as an activity to improve its quality, da'wah is an essential part of constructive theological dialogue efforts in religion, where exclusive groups can even participate in this dialogue (Nes-Visscher, 2013). Van Wiele's research also shows that defensive attitudes can bridge between inclusive and exclusive religious attitudes (Van Wiele, 2005).

Fourth, regarding *live-in* activities and harmony forums. The Indonesian government has long facilitated harmony forums, but *live-in* are a new activity to improve religious harmony in Malang. Religious leaders stated that this activity aims to foster a sense of familiarity, openness, and mutual trust among religious communities. This sense of familiarity, openness, and mutual trust will encourage someone to have a pro-existence attitude. *Pro-existence* is the attitude and awareness that life is not for one's religion but also life together with people of other religions so that all religious people can fight together to uphold the basic principles of religious teachings, such as justice and truth, to overcome humanitarian problems, such as ignorance, and poverty (Wiyata, 2006).

This *live-in* activity can be a solution to obstacles to religious harmony. Soleh's research shows that there are obstacles to building religious harmony. Among other things, (1) religious communities have no mutual distrust. (2) there needs to be better communication between religious communities. (3) the gap between religious leaders and lay people so that religious dialogue does not involve lower society. (4) Lack of facilities to support strengthening religious harmony. (5) requires a solid spirit to continue to fight for inclusive attitudes and dialogue between religious communities (Soleh & Rahmawati, 2020).

6. Conclusions.

Based on the description above, the researcher conveys three things as follows. *First*, religious leaders in Malang carried out several methods to strengthen religious harmony. Namely, (1) providing the theological foundations of holy verses. (2) reinterpreting exclusive verses so as to provide inclusive understanding. (3) reformulating the meaning of da'wah, creating forums for religious harmony, and (4) carrying out activities, live-in, and cultural development. Religious leaders use three methods to interpret exclusive verses to provide inclusive understanding. They are privatizing exclusive verses, interpreting exclusive verses hermeneutically, and connecting exclusive and inclusive verses to explain proportionally and contextually.

Second, this research makes a significant contribution. (1) find data about various methods of religious leaders in Malang in increasing religious harmony. (2) academically, the methods of religious leaders in interpreting exclusive verses can be a reference in methods of interpreting holy books. (3) in the behavioural aspect, research results can encourage tolerant attitudes and behaviour among different parties with different ideas or religions.

Third, this research recommends the following. (1) Religious communities need to continue socializing inclusive verses to balance radical groups, often using exclusive verses.

(2) academic circles need to develop three methods of interpreting exclusive verses as above to provide inclusive religious understanding and moderate religious attitudes. (3) Religious communities must frequently carry out live-in activities and harmony forums to establish good communication and foster mutual trust between religious communities.

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