



From dogma to dialogue: Approaches to addressing interreligious Intolerance

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Abstract: The phenomenon of interreligious intolerance is still a serious challenge in people's lives, both globally and in Indonesia. Intolerance often arises from a rigid and exclusive interpretation of religious dogma, thus triggering discrimination, conflict, and rejection of groups with different beliefs. This article aims to examine the relationship between dogma and intolerance and to explore interreligious dialogue as an alternative approach in building more inclusive religious relations. This research uses qualitative methods with a library research approach and a narrative literature review. Data were obtained from various books, journal articles, and theological works discussing dogma, intolerance, and interreligious dialogue, and were then analyzed descriptively and comparatively by applying source triangulation. The research results show that intolerance is not primarily caused by the existence of dogma, but rather by exclusive interpretations that reject the existence and dignity of other groups. By utilizing Raimon Panikkar's typology of dialogue, namely dialectical and dialogical dialogue, this article shows that religious beliefs can be maintained while opening up a space for encounters that respect differences. The contribution of this research lies in the application of Panikkar's dialogue framework in the context of Indonesia's religious plurality as an effort to encourage a shift from dogmatic exclusivism to dialogical inclusivism.

Keywords: dialogical inclusivism, dogma, interreligious dialogue, intolerance, religious plurality

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1. Introduction

The phenomenon of interreligious intolerance is currently a major challenge in social life, both globally and in Indonesia. Various conflicts, discrimination, and even hate speech often arise from society's inability to manage differences in belief. In these cases, religious dogma is understood rigidly and exclusively, thus becoming a justification for the rejection of other groups. Rather than bringing peace, dogma is often used as an instrument to strengthen group identities and widen social distances.

Several previous studies have discussed interreligious intolerance from different perspectives. Some scholars focus on the social-political factors that trigger

intolerance of interreligious dialogue and religious conflict in multicultural societies.¹ Others emphasize the importance of interreligious dialogue, religious moderation, and pluralistic education as strategies to reduce tensions among religious communities.²

Although various previous studies have emphasized the importance of interreligious dialogue, religious moderation, and pluralist education in addressing intolerance, most of these studies have focused on practical strategies for building harmonious relationships among religious communities. Attention to the theological roots of intolerance, particularly how religious dogma is understood and interpreted exclusively, remains relatively limited. Furthermore, studies on theological inclusivism generally position inclusivism as the foundation for religious moderation.³

However, these previous studies generally treat dogma and dialogue as two separate aspects. Studies examining the transformation from a dogmatic approach to a dialogical approach to addressing interreligious intolerance remain relatively limited, particularly within a theological framework that understands dialogue as a path toward peace and coexistence. Furthermore, only limited research has specifically connected such dialogical approaches with the context of Indonesian plural society, where interreligious tensions remain a significant challenge.

As the example from the case of interreligious tension shows, intolerance erodes relational idealism in interreligious relations, such as the Christian-Muslim conflict. As researched by Samuel Cornelius Kaha, the most frequently discussed cases of intolerance in Indonesia are the blasphemy committed by Ahok, the governor of Jakarta, and the cultural blasphemy and desecration of the state symbol Pancasila by Rizieq Shihab, a leader of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI). Furthermore, Kaha observed that intolerant acts against Christians are often perpetrated by organizations claiming to represent Islam, stemming from the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) Fatwa No. 56 of 2016, dated December 14, concerning the legality of wearing non-Muslim religious attributes. However, deliberation and consensus, as reflections of Indonesia's diversity, can be used as a solution to address problems, rather than unilateral action or the spread of hate speech.⁴

¹ Nasrun Nurhakim, Muhammad Irfan Adriansyah, and Dinnie Anggraeni Dewi, "Intoleransi Antar Umat Beragama Di Indonesia," *MARAS: Jurnal Penelitian Multidisiplin* 2, no. 1 (2024): 54–59, <https://doi.org/10.60126/maras.v2i1.126>.

² Muzakkir Walad et al., "Pendekatan Pluralisme Agama Dalam Pendidikan Di Indonesia: Tantangan Dan Strategi Implementasi," *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Citra Bakti* 11, no. 3 (2024): 882, <https://doi.org/10.38048/jipcb.v11i3.3749>.

³ Bernard Bistok Lubis et al., "Merawat Keberagaman, Memperkuat Kemanusiaan: Moderasi Beragama Dalam Bingkai Inklusivisme," *Jurnal Hukum Pendidikan Motivasi Harapan* 3, no. 5 (2026): 9–10, <https://ourhope.biz.id/ojs/index.php/JP/article/view/229>.

⁴ Samuel Cornelius Kaha, "Dialog Sebagai Kesadaran Relasional Antar Agama: Respons Teologis Atas Pudarnya Semangat Toleransi Kristen-Islam Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Abdiel: Khazanah Pemikiran Teologi, Pendidikan Agama Kristen Dan Musik Gereja* 4, no. 2 (2020): 136, <https://doi.org/10.37368/ja.v4i2.165>.

Teaching that focuses solely on specific doctrines without providing opportunities for dialogue can potentially block access to understanding differences, ultimately fueling intolerance and conflict. The ability to respond to religious plurality is a crucial aspect that needs to be developed, especially in the context of Christian Religious Education.⁵ The goal of interreligious dialogue is to foster genuine encounters, fostering mutual give-and-take, and eliminate futile disputes aimed at proving the superiority of one religion or another. In true dialogue, other religions are encouraged to showcase their best values, while their truths are recognized and respected. Christianity is lived without relativizing faith, but without being arrogant or exclusive. What is offered is an inclusive approach, one that acknowledges the uniqueness of Christianity without rejecting the truth of other religions.⁶

In this case, the opposite of intolerance should be tolerance. This plays a crucial role as the primary foundation for creating social harmony in a diverse society. By making tolerance a principle of disarmament, all forms of intolerance should be prevented.⁷ The dogmas taught by every religion fundamentally teach the bond of love. However, the current reality is the opposite. Issues of intolerance are frequently heard among the general public, and this is an important study that must be reexamined to minimize them.

This research aims to further examine the relationship between dogma and intolerance and to explore how dialogue can serve as an alternative approach. The aim is to examine how a narrow interpretation of dogma can potentially give rise to intolerance itself. This research also examines the concept of interreligious dialogue as it develops in theological literature, ultimately offering a dialogical paradigm as a path toward more harmonious and inclusive interreligious relations.

2. Research Methods

This article uses a qualitative library research method using a narrative literature review approach. The data sources consist of books, journal articles, and relevant theological writings related to religious dogma, interreligious dialogue, and intolerance. Through this method, the author seeks to re-understand how religious dogma can be interpreted and redirected into a space for dialogue that contributes to reducing cases of intolerance.⁸ And the primary analytical framework used in this

⁵ Nelci Mbelanggaedo and Semy Djulandy Balukh, "Pendidikan Agama Kristen Inklusif Di Era Post-Truth: Pendekatan Dialog Interspiritual," *Imitatio Christo: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 1, no. 1 (2025): 50, <https://doi.org/10.63536/imitatiochristo.v1i1.5>.

⁶ Hans Kung, *On Being a Christian* (New York: The Crown Publishing Group, 1984), 112.

⁷ Peni Kunthi Hermawati, Heru Sujaryanto, and Muhammad Hendri Nuryadi, "Strategi Resolusi Konflik Sosial Melalui Pendidikan Toleransi: Studi Kasus Intoleransi AntarUmat Beragama," *Integrative Perspectives of Social and Science Journal* 2, no. 3 (2025): 4058, <https://ipssj.com/index.php/ojs/article/view/528>.

⁸ John W. Cresswell and J. David Cresswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publishing, 2022), 59.

study is Raimon Panikar's dialogical approach, particularly his concept of dialectical and dialogical dialogue in *The Intra-Religious Dialogue*. This approach is utilized to analyze how religious dogma can move from an exclusive orientation toward a more inclusive and dialogical understanding.

In addition, the study also engages theological perspectives on dialogue and openness proposed by contemporary theologians such as Jürgen Moltmann and Paul F. Knitter to strengthen the conceptual analysis regarding interreligious relations in pluralistic societies. The collected data were analyzed descriptively and critically by identifying patterns of exclusivism, intolerance, and dialogical transformation within theological discourse and socio-religious life.

Through this method, the research seeks to demonstrate that dogma is not inherently a source of division, but can be reinterpreted through dialogical engagement as a constructive medium for peacebuilding, tolerance, and social harmony. Thus, this study contributes to the development of interreligious theological studies and contemporary socio-religious discourse.

3. Results and Discussion

Religious Dogma and the Potential for Intolerance

In Greek, the word dogma can mean a subjective personal opinion, but it can also mean an official, binding decision. In the New Testament, it is used to refer to imperial decrees (Luke 2:1; Acts 17:7) and decisions of the Apostolic council (Acts 16:4). It is with this meaning that Ignatius of Antioch later used the term dogma in the Christian tradition, namely to refer to teachings or decisions originating from God and the apostles.⁹ Dogma is not the same as religious coercion. The coercive nature of religion was simply a method used to resolve differences over the truth of dogma, but this method was clearly inappropriate and unsuitable for its purpose. Coerciveness seeks to force agreement as if it were a sign of truth.¹⁰ In short, dogma is an official teaching that comes from God and the apostles, but its truth is only valid if it is accepted freely, not forced.

Nevertheless, in the practice of religious life, dogma is often understood in an exclusive and absolute manner. At this point, the potential for intolerance begins to emerge. When a religious community considers its teachings as the sole source of truth without opening for dialogue, religion can become an instrument of social exclusion. Gavin D'Costa, for example, argues that religions can learn from one another. Christianity, according to him, can learn from Islam about the simplicity of faith and the emphasis on the oneness of God, while from Asian religions Christianity can learn

⁹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology Vol. I*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 9.

¹⁰ Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology Vol. I*, 11.

a more transcendent understanding of God.¹¹ This perspective demonstrates that interreligious dialogue does not necessarily eliminate religious identity, but instead can become a means of critical reflection upon one's own tradition.

However, this article argues that the main problem does not lie in the existence of dogma itself, but rather in the way dogma is interpreted and exercised within the public sphere. Dogma understood without openness has the potential to produce religious superiority, whereas dogma accompanied by dialogical awareness can strengthen respect for differences. Therefore, intolerance does not arise merely because religions possess truth claims, but because such claims are accompanied by rejection of the existence and dignity of other groups.

This phenomenon can be observed in the Ahok and Rizieq case in Indonesia, which illustrates how religious dogma and interpretation may be utilized within social and political contestation. The controversy surrounding Ahok's statement regarding *Surah Al-Maidah 51* provoked massive reactions from several Islamic groups, particularly those associated with Rizieq Shihab.¹² In this context, religion no longer functioned solely as a spiritual domain, but also as a collective identity highly sensitive to interpretative differences. The reactions that emerged demonstrate how exclusive and dogmatic interpretations can develop into intolerant attitudes when dialogue is replaced by mass mobilization, labeling, and rejection of others. Therefore, the challenge in pluralistic societies is not how to eliminate religious differences, but how to develop an approach that allows them to coexist without leading to intolerance and conflict.

In the theology of religions, attempts to address this issue are commonly categorized into three approaches, namely exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. These approaches explain how one religion understands the existence and truth claims of other religions. Within this framework, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen introduces the concept of the "acceptance model", which acknowledges similarities among religions. The acceptance model acknowledges that religions may contain irreconcilable differences while still affirming the right of each religion to pursue its own understanding of truth and salvation.¹³ Through this perspective, differences are not viewed as threats, but as realities that should be respected within pluralistic societies.

Because of that, first, tolerance and intolerance must be distinguished, and their boundaries must be understood. Tolerance implies disagreement, but with respect for others. Conversely, intolerance arises when disagreement spirals out of control and

¹¹ Gavin D' Costa, *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), 113.

¹² Kaha, "Dialog Sebagai Kesadaran Relasional Antar Agama: Respons Teologis Atas Pudarnya Semangat Toleransi Kristen-Islam Di Indonesia," 136.

¹³ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Tritunggal & Pluralisme Agama: Doktrin Tritunggal Dalam Teologi Kristen Tentang Agama-Agama*, trans. Fandy Handoko Tanujaya (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2020), 6.

leads to a refusal to respect others as equals. Therefore, disliking someone is not intolerance, but only when that dislike leads to the perception of others as inferior.¹⁴ Those who reject intolerance and wish to do so are permitted to do so as long as their reasons are just and impartial. However, such rejection must be accompanied by respect for others, as opposing intolerance in an intolerant manner will only lead to radicalization and further conflict.

Furthermore, intolerance should not merely be understood as an emotical rejection of differences, but as a socio-religious attitude rooted in exclusivist truth claims and the denial of equal respect for others. In this regard, Bernd Simon explains through the “disapproval-respect model” that intolerance emerges when disagreement toward others is no longer accompanied by recognition of their equal dignity as human beings. Thus, intolerance is not simply a theological disagreement but develops into discriminatory attitudes that marginalize other religious communities.¹⁵ In many cases, rigid interpretations of religious dogma strengthen exclusive identities and create boundaries that hinder constructive encounters between religious groups. Therefore, interreligious dialogue becomes essential, not to eliminate religious convictions, but to transform exclusive attitudes into respectful and humane engagement within pluralistic societies.

Interreligious Dialogue in Theoretical Perspective

Dialogue truly needs to be continually strengthened as a means of fighting for humanity and overcoming poverty, while simultaneously fostering empathy, tolerance, and harmony among religious communities. By mutually respecting the characteristics and worldviews of each religion, harmony within a framework of diversity can be achieved. This is crucial given the numerous conflicts in the name of religion in Indonesia, so the role of every religious leader is truly needed.¹⁶ This is aimed at educating the community through religious teachings and fostering a harmonious social life, as well as fostering harmony among adherents of different religions.

Interreligious dialogue not only serves to ease tensions between religious groups but also serves as an important tool in building a more inclusive society. Ethically, dialogue provides a space for discovering and developing shared human values. In the social and political spheres, dialogue can help resolve conflicts and strengthen cooperation based on moral values. In the cultural realm, dialogue encourages pluralistic attitudes through art, culture, and various interreligious

¹⁴ Bernd Simon, “A Social Psychological Approach to Tolerance: The Disapproval–Respect Model,” in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Religion and Beyond: Challenges from the Past and in the Present*, ed. Anne Sarah Matviyets, Giuseppe Veltri, and Jorg Rupke (New York: Routledge, 2023), 29.

¹⁵ Simon, “A Social Psychological Approach to Tolerance: The Disapproval–Respect Model,” 23.

¹⁶ Titin Wulandari Malau, “Dialog Antaragama Dan Kontribusi Tokoh Agama Dalam Penyelesaian Konflik Dan Implementasinya Untuk Memperkuat Toleransi,” *Jurnal Magistra* 2, no. 1 (2024): 7, <https://doi.org/10.62200/magistra.v2i1.70>.

practices. Meanwhile, in education, dialogue serves as an approach that shapes a generation that is tolerant, open to diversity, and capable of facing the challenges of the digital era.¹⁷

Interreligious dialogue can take various forms. First, there is theological dialogue, which addresses the truth claims of each religion. This dialogue, in turn, extends to the realms of life, art, symbols, and opportunities to observe or participate in religious practices, especially worship and reflection. Through this, the dialogue can develop into an inner dialogue, as experienced by Christian figures in India, such as Pere H. Le Saux (Swami Abhishiktananda) and Dom Bede Griffiths.¹⁸ The third form is practical dialogue, which focuses on shared humanitarian issues. An example of this is seen in the 1974 Buddhist-Christian-Hindu-Jewish-Muslim meeting in Colombo under the theme "Towards a World Community."¹⁹

Within the context of interreligious dialogue, an article describes how Nurcholish Madjid mediates exclusivist conflicts by instilling moderate Islamic values. Madjid emphasizes that moderation is the ultimate goal in practicing religious teachings. Moderate Islam, for Madjid, is one that rejects extremism and violence and prioritizes a dialogical and peaceful approach to social realities. Religious moderation, for Madjid, also means appreciating the complexities of modern life without abandoning fundamental Islamic values, such as justice, compassion, and equality.²⁰

From Moltmann's perspective in *Theology of Hope*, interreligious dialogue is not merely a theological conversation between religious communities, but a public and transformative engagement aimed at building justice, peace, and human solidarity within pluralistic societies. This can be seen from the basis of Moltmann's statement in the "Hoping and Thinking" section.²¹ In this framework, dialogue becomes an ethical and theological encounter that enables religions to contribute together toward humanitarian concerns and social harmony without losing their respective identities. Thus, interreligious dialogue is understood not as the relativization of faith, but as a constructive participation in shared public life.

From the perspective of Buddhist theologian Thich Nhat Hanh, true dialogue occurs when both parties are open to learning and change. In dialogue, from Hanh's perspective, one needs to recognize that truth can be found not only within one's own

¹⁷ Sari Marlina, "Dialog Antar Agama Sebagai Basis Humanise Global," *Jurnal Agama Dan Humaniora* 1, no. 1 (2025): 8, <http://jurnal.pustakabangsaindonesia.com/index.php/jah/article/view/2>.

¹⁸ John Hick, *God Has Many Names* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982), 116.

¹⁹ Hick, *God Has Many Names*, 116.

²⁰ Alam Khaerul Hidayat and Shofiyullah Muzammi, "Nurcholish Madjid Dan Konsep Islam Inklusif Di Indonesia: Sebuah Studi Tentang Pemikiran Dan Pengaruhnya Terhadap Islam Moderat," *Al-Afkar: Journal for Islamic Studies* 8, no. 4 (2025): 270, <https://doi.org/10.31943/afkarjournal.v8i4.1782>.

²¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1993), 34.

group or religion but also through others. If one believes oneself to be the most righteous and closes oneself off to other views, dialogue loses its meaning. Dialogue is also not an attempt to make others equal to oneself, but rather a process of mutual understanding and enrichment.²² Therefore, interreligious dialogue must be conducted with humility and openness, so that the good and meaningful values of other traditions can help deepen one's understanding and humanity.

From the perspective of interreligious dialogue, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, in *The Hindu View of Life*, asserts that religion is not a static and closed tradition, but rather a reality that continues to evolve through encounters with other cultures, ideas, and religions. According to Radhakrishnan, the history of Hinduism shows that interaction with various traditions—from Buddhism and Islam to Western influences—has actually encouraged renewal and deepening of religious understanding without losing its fundamental identity. This perspective demonstrates that interreligious dialogue should not be understood as a threat to dogma, but as a space for reflection and transformation that allows religion to remain alive, relevant, and open to the existence of “others” in a pluralistic society.²³

The idea of a global interreligious dialogical community remains more of a dream than a concrete reality. To understand this dream, Paul F. Knitter examines the reasons why many believe interreligious dialogue is not only possible but also necessary. Philosophers help explain this because their task is to interpret and guide how humans understand the world and themselves in their time. In modern Western philosophy, there is a school that views reality as constantly evolving rather than static.²⁴ In this case, the world and humans are depicted as not being in a fixed state, but always in a process that will occur.

Many problems in dialogue with other religions, when starting from a Christian perspective, actually stem from Christian theology itself. A Christian theologian cannot typically be an expert on another religion, and conversely, an expert on another religion cannot delve deeply into Christian theology. Hans Kung believes that if interreligious dialogue is to proceed smoothly and avoid conflict from the outset, any comparison or confrontation must be approached with a critical attitude toward both sides.²⁵ God calls Christians to be His instruments in mission. However, carrying out this mission amidst diversity is not easy, especially when the majority group discriminates against the Christian minority.²⁶ In this situation, dialogue becomes the

²² Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (New York: Penguin Group, 2007), 9.

²³ Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2018), 8–9.

²⁴ Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 8.

²⁵ Kung, *On Being a Christian*, 114.

²⁶ Mery Saragih Simarmata, “Prophetic Dialogue as Mission in the Context of Diversity: Toward a Theology of Wider Ecumenism,” in *Religion's Mission in Culture: An International Proceeding of STT HKBP Pematangsiantar*, ed. Pintor Marihot Sitanggang and Ricky Pramono Hasibuan (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2023), 52.

most effective and crucial means. In this case, it actually opens the way to interreligious dialogue, which can lead to the exclusivism of one religion becoming inclusive through openness from both sides or with others.

From Dogmatic Exclusivism to Dialogical Inclusivism

Every religious adherent believes that their religion is the true one. This belief often leads to claims of exclusivism, because if a teaching is considered true, then anything contrary to it is considered false. For example, if Islam is believed to be the true religion, then teachings outside of Islam are not recognized as religious truth. However, each religious tradition generally develops a more subtle perspective to avoid appearing too harsh, for example, by stating that there are levels of truth, so that the truth in other religions is essentially still part of the truth of their religion, even if the adherents of those other religions are not aware of it. Furthermore, religious traditions often distinguish between objective and subjective truth, so that a person can be sincere in their faith but still be considered objectively wrong, even though the blame is entirely on them.²⁷

The exclusivist view, as explained by Dhani Dianthani and Ibrahim, is often criticized by pluralist and inclusive theologians. Exclusivism is considered to be dogmatic, closed, and unable to respond to the reality of religious diversity. However, proponents of exclusivism argue that theological truth should not be compromised for the sake of tolerance.²⁸

This is further strengthened by Harold Netland²⁹ and Paul F. Knitter³⁰, who explain that many religious traditions tend to maintain particular truth claims regarding their doctrines and path of salvation. This theological conviction often gives rise to exclusivist perspectives, especially when religious truth is interpreted in an absolute and closed manner toward other traditions. However, many religious communities also develop more inclusive approaches by acknowledging that elements of truth and goodness may exist in other religions, even while maintaining commitment to their own faith traditions. Discussions concerning objective and subjective truth become important, particularly in understanding how religious believers can remain faithful to their convictions while still respecting the existence of others within pluralistic societies.

²⁷ Raimon Panikkar, *The Intra-Religious Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 5.

²⁸ Dhani Dianthani and Ibrahim, "Menimbang Jalan Keselamatan: Telaah Kritis Terhadap Paradigma Eksklusivisme, Inklusivisme, Dan Pluralisme," *GRAVEOS JOURNAL* 1, no. 2 (2025): 11, <https://ejournal.sttbisanry.ac.id/gj/article/view/11>.

²⁹ Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith & Mission* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2001), 97.

³⁰ Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, 159.

In its extreme form, exclusivism makes religion hostile to diversity and rejects tolerance, often leading to inter-religious conflict.³¹ Dogma, in particular, is considered the belief that a single teaching answers all truths in life. However, taking dogma too seriously can actually create a space for conflict with other religious teachings. Understanding dogma should open up discussion with other religions about what is good. Religious leaders should also open up the opportunity for their own religious teachings to be introduced to everyone. This will create a space for inclusivism to maintain stable relations between religions. Dialogue must continue, and dogma must be declared.

The state needs to educate every citizen about humanitarian values to combat religious exclusivism and fanaticism. Therefore, a state that upholds tolerance must educate its citizens to live in accordance with the humanitarian truths that underlie it.³² That's why dialogical inclusivism needs to be realized. Inclusivism must be implemented because it's based on the understanding of caution, not glorifying religion, as if there were no darkness, deception, or slavery within it. Secondly, it's also important to understand that inclusivism is interpreted as caution, stating that religions themselves are merely vehicles to salvation.³³

Through dialogue, religious communities are encouraged not only to proclaim their beliefs but also to listen to and learn from others. In this context, dialogical inclusivism becomes important as an approach that maintains commitment to one faith while remaining open to encounters with different religious traditions. Inclusivism should not be understood as relativizing religion, but as an attitude of humility and caution that recognizes the limitations of human understanding in comprehending ultimate truth.

In addition to the role of religious communities, the state also has an important responsibility in fostering tolerance within pluralistic societies. A democratic state that upholds social harmony needs to educate its citizens in humanitarian values, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence in order to reduce religious exclusivism and fanaticism. Through education and public discourse, dialogical inclusivism can be strengthened as a social and ethical framework that encourages interreligious understanding rather than hostility.³⁴ In this sense, religion should not merely function

³¹ Dylfard Edward Pandey and Lasino, "Soteriologi Alkitab Di Tengah Eksklusivisme, Inklusivisme, Dan Pluralisme," *EULOGIA: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristiani* 2, no. 2 (2022): 106, <https://doi.org/10.62738/ej.v2i2.41>.

³² Warren Zev Harvey, "Theories of Tolerance in Jewish Philosophy," in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Religion and Beyond: Challenges from the Past and in the Present*, ed. Anne Sarah Matviyets, Giuseppe Veltri, and Jorg Rupke (New York: Routledge, 2023), 94.

³³ Pandey and Lasino, "Soteriologi Alkitab Di Tengah Eksklusivisme, Inklusivisme, Dan Pluralisme," 107.

³⁴ Pandey and Lasino, "Soteriologi Alkitab Di Tengah Eksklusivisme, Inklusivisme, Dan Pluralisme," 107.

as an exclusive claim to salvation, but also as a moral and spiritual vehicles that contribute to peace and humanity.

In his book, *The Intra-Religious Dialogue*, Raimon Panikkar explains two types of dialogue in his work, "The Intra-Religious Dialogue." Dialectical dialogue, a conversation about a topic or opinion, discusses ideas, arguments, or doctrines. Dialogic dialogue, on the other hand, is an intersubjective conversation that focuses on the participants themselves, not merely discussing opinions but also addressing who they are through their experiences, identities, and attitudes. In dialectical dialogue, the interlocutors weigh arguments. In dialogic dialogue, the interlocutor is not merely a source of ideas but a real person to be encountered.³⁵ From Panikkar's perspective on dialogue, the dialogical form of dialogue actually opens up an inclusive space, focusing not only on the content of a religion's teachings but also on the encounter between subjects. Here, truth is also seen in others, not just in the concepts or doctrines of a single religion.

In the theology of religion, the shift from exclusivism to inclusivism emphasizes that the role of Jesus Christ in salvation cannot be equated with the role of the church. According to the New Testament, Christ alone is the mediator between God and humanity (1Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24). The church does play a role in the order of salvation, but its role is never equal to that of Christ. Therefore, the view that overemphasizes the church (ecclesiastical) needs to be transcended and made the standard of salvation for others.³⁶ Therefore, the implementation of this dialogue should be able to answer the challenges of conflict that occur in the current era, which is facing an intolerant life among religious communities.

From the perspective of Moltmann's theology of the incarnation, the incarnation of Jesus Christ demonstrates God's openness and solidarity toward humanity. In Jesus Christ, God does not remain distant from human existence but enters into human history, suffering, and relational life.³⁷ This incarnational understanding becomes an important theological foundation for interreligious dialogue because it shows that divine truth is revealed through encounter, presence, and relational engagement rather than through domination or coercion. Therefore, the church, as a community that follows Christ, is called to embody the same dialogical openness in relating to others. Although the role of Christ as mediator cannot be equated with the role of the church, the church nevertheless participates in Christ's mission by practicing humility, reconciliation, and openness within pluralistic societies. Dialogue in this context

³⁵ Panikkar, *The Intra-Religious Dialogue*, 30.

³⁶ Jacques Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 186.

³⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1990), 57–58.

becomes not a compromise faith, but a reflection of the incarnational character of Christ himself.

The Relevance of Interreligious Dialogue in Facing Contemporary Intolerance

In the implementation of inclusive dialogue, it is important to recognize that inclusivism violates the rule that each tradition must be treated as a totality. One cannot simply affirm some aspects of another tradition. When one does so, one is still operating from one's own tradition and responding to what seems good for that tradition. The aspects the inclusivist affirms or responds to may differ from the self-understanding of representatives of other religions.³⁸

Amid rising intolerance and religious-based conflict, interreligious dialogue is a crucial tool for building understanding, trust, and cooperation among adherents of different faiths. Dialogue is not merely a theological conversation, but also an effort to get to know each other humanely, appreciate differences, and find common ground that can strengthen social solidarity. Through dialogue, prejudice, which often underlies intolerance, can be reduced, while opening up space for tolerance, reconciliation, and peace is further expanded.

The possibility of interreligious dialogue requires a major shift in how religions understand themselves. From a Christological perspective, the principle of dialogue can be rooted in the incarnation and kenosis of Jesus Christ. Through the incarnation, God enters human and encounters humanity in openness and relationality. Likewise, the kenotic character of Christ (Phil 2:5–8) demonstrates humility, self-emptying, and solidarity toward others.³⁹ Consequently, understandings of religious truth also undergo significant changes. Although many religions already recognize plurality, the level of openness to other faiths varies, both between religions and within each religion.⁴⁰ This becomes an important theological foundation because dialogue can only develop through humility, openness, and the willingness to encounter others without domination. In this sense, dialogue is not the abandonment of faith convictions, but the embodiment of Christ's relational and incarnational attitude in responding to plurality.

If a religious community believes that all humanity faces the same challenges and that their faith offers a path to salvation, then they have a moral responsibility to share this with others. However, interreligious dialogue must be conducted with wisdom, sensitivity, and respect, so as not to offend or demean the other party. Such dialogue is always influenced by historical and cultural backgrounds, which can act as

³⁸ Kärkkäinen, *Tritunggal & Pluralisme Agama: Doktrin Tritunggal Dalam Teologi Kristen Tentang Agama-Agama*, 128.

³⁹ Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, 173.

⁴⁰ Catherine Cornille, "Introduction," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, ed. Catherine Cornille (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd Publication, 2013), xiii.

bridges or obstacles to mutual understanding.⁴¹ Therefore, Christians engaging in interreligious dialogue must understand dialogue not merely as an effort to avoid conflict, but as a form of Christian presence in the public sphere. Inspired by the incarnational and kenotic example of Jesus Christ, Christian dialogue should be carried out through humility, openness, and solidarity within pluralistic societies.

Of particular importance is the mutual emphasis on love, compassion, and forgiveness for reconciliation and peace.⁴² Furthermore, interreligious dialogue has practical relevance in today's increasingly pluralistic world, including in education, politics, and culture. In schools, interreligious dialogue helps shape a more tolerant and open generation. In the political realm, it forms the basis for inclusive policies. In socio-cultural life, dialogue creates a space for encounter that enriches shared identities without erasing differences. Thus, interreligious dialogue is not merely discourse, but a real necessity for responding to the challenges of intolerance and building a peaceful and just society.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that interreligious intolerance does not primarily arise from the existence of religious dogma itself, but from rigid, exclusive, and closed interpretations of dogma that deny openness toward others. Dogma, when understood solely as an absolute truth claim without dialogical engagement, has the potential to strengthen social exclusion and religious hostility. However, through the perspectives of interreligious dialogue developed by Raimon Panikkar, Jürgen Moltmann, Paul F. Knitter, and other contemporary thinkers, dogma can be reinterpreted as a constructive foundation for encounter, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence. Interreligious dialogue, therefore, should not be understood as an effort to relativize faith, but as a means of maintaining religious conviction while fostering openness toward people of different religious traditions within pluralistic societies.

The findings further indicate that addressing contemporary intolerance requires a shift from dogmatic exclusivism toward dialogical inclusivism, where religious communities remain faithful to their own beliefs while recognizing the dignity and humanity of others. By integrating Panikkar's distinction between dialectical and dialogical dialogue with contemporary theological reflections on openness, solidarity, and coexistence, this study offers a theological framework that positions dialogue not merely as a social strategy but as an expression of religious maturity. Such an approach is particularly relevant within the Indonesian context, where religious diversity

⁴¹ Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith & Mission*, 282.

⁴² Todd Johanson, "Pluralistic Inclusivism and Christian-Muslim Dialogue: The Challenge of Moving beyond Polite Discussion toward Reconciliation and Peace," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 51, no. 1 (2016): 47, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ecu.2016.0009>.

continues to present both challenges and opportunities for building social harmony, justice, and sustainable peace.

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Author Contributions

Author 1: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal Analysis, Writing–Original Draft.

Author 2: Formal Analysis, Review, Writing.

Ethical Approval and Consent

This study relies entirely on textual and historical analysis; therefore, formal ethical approval and human participant consent were not required.

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