

**STUDI KOMPARASI: ANALISIS TEOLOGIS KONSEP  
TOLERANSI ANTARA TRADISI ISLAM DAN KRISTEN**

**THE COMPARATIVE STUDY: THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF  
TOLERANCE BETWEEN ISLAM DAN CHRISTIANITY  
TRADITIONS**

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***Abstract***

*This paper discusses tolerance from Christianity and Islam perspective. What is tolerance: basis, limit, and example in the scripture—the research doing by bibliography approach. Books, journals, and scriptures are the resources. Hopefully, the results can provide a broader understanding of the theology and tolerance field. Thus these works can be used as references. Through discussion, it found that Christianity and Islam talk about tolerance. They tolerate others, even though there are some interpretations to interpret the scripture either in Christianity or Islam, but they are still open to others. Tolerance is a necessity that becomes an advantage to compete with each other in the pursuit of goodness.*

***Keywords:*** *Christianity, Islam, Limits, Tolerance-Intolerance.*

**Abstrak**

Tulisan ini mendiskusikan toleransi dari perspektif Kristen dan Islam. Apa itu toleransi: dasar, batasan, dan teladan dalam kitab suci—penelitian yang dilakukan dengan pendekatan kepustakaan. Buku, jurnal, dan tulisan suci adalah sumbernya. Artikel ini diharapkan dapat memberikan pemahaman yang lebih luas tentang bidang teologi dan toleransi. Dengan demikian, karya-karya tersebut dapat dijadikan sebagai referensi. Melalui diskusi, hal itu akan ditemukan bahwa Kristen dan Islam berbicara banyak tentang toleransi. Mereka menoleransi orang lain, meskipun ada beberapa interpretasi yang kurang sesuai untuk menafsirkan kitab suci baik dalam agama Kristen atau Islam, tetapi mereka tetap terbuka untuk orang lain. Toleransi merupakan keniscayaan yang menjadi keunggulan untuk saling bersaing dalam mengejar kebaikan.

Kata kunci: Kristen, Islam, Toleransi, Intoleran

## Pendahuluan

In general, tolerance is a willingness in humans to accept everyone who differs. As the Cambridge dictionary stated, tolerance is the willingness to accept behavior and beliefs different from our own, although we might not agree with or approve them<sup>1</sup>. It is necessary for a peaceful, loving environment by willing to accept different opinions without fighting. People who cannot tolerate tolerance often get angry on conflicting issues and destroy the tranquility of the place in the relationship, workplaces, and society. Lack of tolerance leads people to fight, violence, and finally, destroys society's peace, security, and interreligious relationships.

Specifically, tolerance can be a set of "attitudes," as implied by Andrew R. Murph that tolerance is an attitude; admit the possible validity of seemingly contradictory viewpoints, hesitancy in passing value or truth judgments on individual or group belief<sup>2</sup>. It is pretty different from Hence Fenton, who stated that lack of tolerance contributes to terrorism. Tolerance-intolerance is "source" of terrorist violence. Religious intolerance is a contributing factor in social and political conflict, including manifestations of terrorist violence<sup>3</sup>. It is in line with Bowlin's view in the term of tolerance is part of society. Bowlin said that the problems of association, peaceful coexistence, individuals and groups, are constant and unavoidable. Thus so too is an appeal to tolerance<sup>4</sup>. Unlike this all, Siregar argues that tolerance is "part of the teaching of the religion." Tolerance is a great and noble concept that entirely became an organic part of the teachings of the religions<sup>5</sup>. Religion contributes to tolerance issues.

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<sup>1</sup> Walter, E., Woodford, K., & Good, M. (Eds.). (2008). *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Cambridge University Press. 1531

<sup>2</sup> Murphy, A. R. (1997). Tolerance, Toleration, and the Liberal Tradition. *Polity*, 29(4), 593–623. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3235269>

<sup>3</sup> Fenton, A. J. (2016). FAITH, INTOLERANCE, VIOLENCE AND BIGOTRY Legal and Constitutional Issues of Freedom of Religion in Indonesia<sup>1</sup>. *JOURNAL OF INDONESIAN ISLAM*, Volume 10, Number 02, December 2016, 181–212.

<sup>4</sup> Bowlin, J. R. & Philosophy Documentation Center. (2006). Tolerance among the Fathers: *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 26(1), 3–36.

<sup>5</sup> Siregar, C. (2016). Pluralism and Religious Tolerance in Indonesia: An Ethical-Theological Review Based on Christian Faith Perspectives. *Humaniora*, 7(3), 349.

Religion influences tolerance-intolerance. In this case, of course, each religion has a concept, basis, form, and limitations that cannot be generalized. For this reason, the author will look at tolerance in Christianity and Islam. We will discuss tolerance from Christianity and Islam perspective, the basis, the limit, and the examples in scripture. Tolerance in Christianity and Islam will look based on the principle of their scripture and the scholar and discuss related to the issue.

## **THE CONCEPT OF TOLERANCE IN CHRISTIANITY**

Discussing Christian tolerance means talking about tolerance based on Christian teachings. Tolerance is not a word that only belongs to one belief. As stated by Jay Newman in *The Idea of Religious Tolerance*, tolerance is not necessarily related to religious belief<sup>6</sup>. The word tolerance is a noun that corresponds to the verb tolerate, and men can tolerate all sorts of things; a teacher can tolerate the student's stupidity or lousy manner, a wife can tolerate the husband's eccentricities, and so on. Therefore, Christian tolerance is the tolerance based on these Christian principles.

Christian tolerance means tolerance that is rooted in the laws applicable in Christianity. Some works of literature have tried to see tolerance. Derrida sees that in the spirit of Christianity, tolerance regard as the highest form of charity, which seems to have been appropriated or accepted by other religions. Tolerance is, first of all, a form of charity. He sees that tolerance in Christianity is more about charity. Derrida also mentions that the notion of tolerance has a kind of medical meaning.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, Habermas saw the notion of Christian tolerance as a moral sense. He saw that tolerance practiced for centuries in this paternalistic spirit. Thus Jewett in *Christian Tolerance* argues that tolerance is welcome, therefore, as Christ has welcomed for the glory of God. He assumed this is the concrete of tolerance.<sup>8</sup> What discussed predecessor helped, but by this paper, we will look at tolerance based on the principle of the Two Commandments in Christianity.

In Christianity, there is a fundamental principle called The first and second great commandments. Which are these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. This commandment is the law Jesus delivered when dealing with Pharisees, a lawyer.

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<sup>6</sup> Newman, J. (2021). *The Idea of Religious Tolerance*. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Mengwei (2021), Tolerance or Hospitality, *Frontiers of Philosophy in China*, March 2012, vol 7. Mach Pp. 154-163.

<sup>8</sup> Jewett., Robert 1982 "Christian Tolerance: Pauls massage to the modern church", The Westminster Press

*22:34 When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they came together, 22:35, and one of them, a teacher of the law, tried to trap him with a question. 22:36 "Teacher," he asked, "which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" 22:37 Jesus answered, " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 22:38 This is the greatest and the most important commandment. 22:39 The second most important commandment is like it: 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself.' 22:40 The whole Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets depend on these two commandments."*

First, those two commandments are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and the second most important commandment is like it; loves your neighbor as you love yourself. The whole Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets depend on these two commandments. From this principle, it can be seen that the basic principle of Christianity is love. That is, love God and love others. There are two directions, vertical and horizontal. The first is transcendent God, and the second is immanent fellow human beings.

The principle is that firstly humans love God, then they love others. In loving others, there is a tolerant value. In contrast, the problematic issue is to see the meaning of love itself. In Christian teaching, love is understood as patient and kind, not jealous or conceited or proud, not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable, does not keep a record of wrongs. Love is not happy with evil but is happy with the truth. Those are the meaning of love in Christianity. This love is a tolerance value in Christian tolerance.

*"13:4 Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; 13:5 love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; 13:6 love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth (1 Corinthians 13: 4-5)"*

Loving is part of being tolerant, even more so because love is a fundamental principle in Christianity. Moreover, Jesus, its self is a figure of tolerance. Why could Jesus be a figure of tolerance? Because He is the model-teacher of universal love. He teaches the principle of love. Love that contains the value of tolerance, even more than that. He was not only tolerant but said to love, even if it was an enemy. Tolerance in Christianity is to tolerate by firstly loving God and then loving the others.

## **WHAT ARE THE LIMITS FOR CHRISTIAN TO BE TOLERANT?**

Understanding the limits of intolerance is a dilemma because many things are difficult to determine as common boundaries. For example, as Wilhelm Heitmeyer stated in *Tolerance as Risk*, asymmetry relationships prevail

through the concept of tolerance as an asymmetry.<sup>9</sup> There is an assumption that tolerance can be afforded only by the powerful. The powerless cannot show tolerance toward the powerful, but the only obeisance. It is similar in the relationship between majority and minority. The majority can tolerate the minority, but the minority cannot do the same toward the majority. This case is complex because we cannot establish the same amount of power in every religion in a country. Another difficulty is the issue of absoluteness. As stated by James E. Wood, Jr. in *Tolerance and Truth in Religion*, each religious tradition's absoluteness served to provide a religious foundation for the intolerance of other faiths.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, the fact that we can not deny absolutism from one religion. Each religion has its absolutism. We can see that it is difficult to determine the limit without reducing, lowering, or decreasing the other, but tolerance requires a limit, especially from in Christian perspective.

The limits of tolerance in Christianity cannot be understood rigidly. Even basically, as humans, we are limited therefore need limits, but on the other hand, can we limit love? As we understand that tolerance is part of love. This question is a tricky thing. As expressed by Robert Jewett in *Christian Tolerance* that the limit of tolerance is a dilemma. Therefore, it understands that the setting of the limits is an ongoing challenge requiring the entire body of Christ's resources, both past, and present.<sup>11</sup> It lets us understand that tolerance limits require the fundamental role of our faith in Christ in behaving towards others.

We need order as a limit so that even if a tolerant attitude cannot be rigidly limited, it does not mean that it has no limits. Love does not mean letting go without limits, especially allowing things contrary to love to happen. At least two things need to emphasize in a tolerant boundary attitude in Christianity: tolerance because of God; tolerance does not mean allowing evil.

The first is being tolerant because of God. First things should hold that the principle is that Christian people must first love their Lord in heart, soul, and mind. After that loving their neighbor as they love themselves. The basic limit is that Christians must love their God. Tolerance in Christianity must not go beyond the divine limit. The basic principle that he is tolerant, loving others is sourced from God, whom he believes. The more he loved his Lord, the more he loved his fellowmen. It is naive if a Christian loves God but is intolerant of

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<sup>9</sup> Heitmeyer, 2003 International Handbook of Violence Research, USA. Kluwer Academic Publishers

<sup>10</sup> James E. Wood (1982) Jr. in *Tolerance and Truth in Religion*, Journal of Church and State Vol. 24, No. 1

<sup>11</sup> Jewett., Robert 1982 "Christian Tolerance: Pauls massage to the modern church", The Westminster Press

others; vice versa, we say that we love our neighbor but do not obey our God, which is a sin. It is the first and foremost law.

Second, tolerance does not mean allowing evil. Tolerance does not mean allowing intolerance to occur cause love is not happy with evil but is happy with the truth (1 Corinthians 13: 6). Being tolerant does not mean allowing errors to occur. In Christianity, tolerance does not mean condoning ugliness. Tolerance is to love, not to let injustice happen. Love does not rejoice in iniquity but rejoices in the truth. Vague things can happen in the name of tolerance. In the name of tolerance, people feel entitled to others. For example, on the opinion of tolerance, one group feels superior to another group. Feeling like the majority thinking must be tolerant. It is a delusion. Being tolerant is not because of the majority of the minority.

Tolerance does not place a particular person or group in a specific position, such as inferior. Instead, it positions the person or group as they should. If he is of a different culture, tolerance places the person in the same culture as ours, not against the applicable laws and regulations. Tolerance should rejoice in the truth, not falsehood and hypocrisy.

## DISCOURSES OF TOLERANCE IN SCRIPTURE

There are several stories related to tolerance in the scripture. Only some stories are selected and presented here, namely: 1). Tolerance to class bias. (Women and children); 2). Tolerance of Jews and Gentiles (Peter and Cornelius); 3). Jesus' tolerance of His disciples (Peter, Jude, Tomas).

## TOLERANCE IN BIAS CLASS

Christianity grew out of the world of a patriarchal society where men dominated in all areas of life, economy, home, religion<sup>12</sup>. (Paul, n.d.p. 30) This position assumed that women, children, and slaves were less than human, simply possessions of men. Until this time, the world still operates on that superiority of man. However, Jesus defied this patriarchal view of the world<sup>13</sup>. (Paul, n.d, pp. 30-31) He shows His attitude to tolerate this class. Jesus gave particular value to children. Jesus said, *"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."* (Matthew 19:14)<sup>14</sup>(Raihani, 2014, p.8) The Gospel of Matthew (19:13-15) told that some people took their children to Jesus so He could bless them, but Jesus's disciples told the people to leave. They did not want Jesus to be bothered. Then Jesus said to let the children come to Him. He said that everyone needs to be like a child to

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<sup>12</sup> Paul, P. J. (n.d.). *Tool 3: Exploring how the Bible talks about women and men*. 24.

<sup>13</sup> Paul, P. J. (n.d.). *Tool 3: Exploring how the Bible talks about women and men*. 24.

<sup>14</sup> Raihani. (2014). Creating a Culture of Religious Tolerance in an Indonesian School. *southeast Asia Research*, 22(4), 541–560

go to heaven. He is tolerant to accept the children and put them as an example to who wants to go to heaven needs to be like them.

Likewise, the Matthew Gospel provides numerous scenes of Jesus' attitude of tolerance, affirmation, care, and non-discrimination towards females with children. For Christ, females were human beings who equally dispose of knowing God, witnessing God's presence, and who needed divine provision to resolve life difficulties just as their male counterparts<sup>15</sup>. (Dei, 2018, p. 160) Jesus makes interaction with women. He is tolerant of women's positions. Here, some interaction with women. Matthew records the experience of a lone woman who was suffering from hemorrhage (9:20-22)<sup>16</sup>. (Dei, 2018, p. 166) This woman touched the hem of Christ's garment, and she healed. Next, Jesus also uses women as subjects/images of women in His' parables and teaching; parallels between the kingdom of God and the yeast mixed by a woman (Matt 13:33), gospel-induced tension within the family unit (Matt 10:35, 37), the reward for shunning family loyalty in favor of Jesus (Matt 19:29), parallels between the ten virgins and the kingdom of God (Matt 25:1-13). (Dei, 2018, p. 166) <sup>17</sup>And the more assertive, that the story of Samaritan woman. Jewish do not share things in common with Samaritans, but Jesus did it<sup>18</sup>. (Ramos, 2009, p. 2) The dialogue happens around a well, below the bright midday sun, in a lonely place. The conversation starts because of an elementary need, water. The developing dialogue will take account of other needs and lead the woman and the people of her village to faith. The woman is the image of the passionate human will, and Jesus discovers as the only one able to answer the absolute's thirst found in all persons coming into this world<sup>19</sup>. (Ramos, 2009, p. 1)

## **TOLERANCE OF JEWS AND GENTILES (PETER AND CORNELIUS)**

The story of Peter, Jews, and Cornelius, non-Jews, in acts 10:1–16, introduces Peter's dream in which Peter has it forcibly demonstrated that *"What God has made clean. You must not call profane"*. This dream has such an impact on Peter that it becomes the substance of Peter's report in acts 11:1-18 to the Church in Jerusalem concerning the acceptability of gentiles into the

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<sup>15</sup> Dei, D. (2018). The Theological Ethical Survey Of Jesus Attitude Toward Females in The Matthean Gospel, 14

<sup>16</sup> Dei, D. (2018). The Theological Ethical Survey Of Jesus Attitude Toward Females in The Matthean Gospel 1, 14.

<sup>17</sup> Dei, D. (2018). The Theological Ethical Survey Of Jesus Attitude Toward Females in The Matthean Gospel 1, 14.

<sup>18</sup> Ramos, G. D. (2009). *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (Jn 4:1-42)*. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Ramos, G. D. (2009). *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (Jn 4:1-42)*. 6.

Church<sup>20</sup>. (Lee, 2010, p.103) By this, there was openness to non-Jews. What we see in these passages is the profound debate between universalism and particularism. It remains either a point of contention or potential dialogue in both intra-faith and interfaith dialogue and which drawn in particularly sharp relief in Christian-Jewish dialogue; there is tolerance attitude<sup>21</sup>. (Lee, 2010, p.103) Peter is the representative of the Jewish citizen and Cornelius of the Gentile. The social situation at that time prohibited Jews and non-Jews from associating with each other, but the two figures communicated, and a relationship occurred, especially concerning the faith.

### JESUS' TOLERANCE OF HIS DISCIPLES (PETER, JUDE, THOMAS)

Jesus Himself, teaching the law first and foremost, applied what He said. He loved God so that he could tolerate the attitudes and actions of his disciples. Some of the things that can use as a guide are Judas the betrayal, Peter the denial, and Thomas the unbelief.

Judas, in the Gospel of John, is described as an untrustworthy person. He was the treasurer for Jesus and his 12 disciples, carrying the money bag the group shared and sometimes stealing from it. The sum of the testimony is that Judas was from first to last a monster of incredible and devilish wickedness<sup>22</sup>. Judas, according to John, was a liar and a thief.

*"Now this he said, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and having the bag took away what put therein." John tells us that "after the sop, then entered Satan into him. (Ballantine, 2021. p. 101)*

He betrayed Jesus by selling Him thirty pieces of silver according to an account in the Gospel of Matthew 26:15 in the New Testament. With things like this, Jesus had tolerance. Jesus was tolerant of Judas even though he knew he was a thief and would eventually betray Him. Jesus knows and remaining him as written in Matthew.

*"The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."*

Jesus never allowed his superhuman knowledge to save him pain. What He is doing is accepting the situation. He reminded Judas regarding this matter. However, it was because Judas himself lived in that darkness. Even though he

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<sup>20</sup> Lee, M. (2010). *The Conversion of Cornelius, seen against the Political and Social Background of the Roman Empire*. The University of Birmingham.

<sup>21</sup> Lee, M. (2010). *The Conversion of Cornelius, seen against the Political and Social Background of the Roman Empire*. The University of Birmingham.

<sup>22</sup> Ballantine, P. W. G. (1889). Judas Iscariot. *The Old and New Testament Student*, Vol 9 No. 2 (Aug. 1889), 100–102.



had warned, he still did. Loving God is the main thing that loves others, so why did He not use His power to control Judas. The life of Jesus spends in the daily society of Judas. He walked with him, and he ate with him; he prayed with him. Judas admitted into all the sacred privacies of that life of loving labors and measureless.

Peter, called to be a disciple of Jesus at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, is a Jewish fisherman who denied Jesus three times. Jesus is already reminding him. Jesus told Peter, "This very night you will deny me three times" (Mark14:30), but Peter quickly denied it<sup>23</sup>. (McEleney, 1990, p. 467) Moreover, finally, he did it. Peter, who clearly said, "I do not know Jesus!"

*"...A maid looked at Peter's face and said, 'I know who you are! You are a friend of Jesus!' Peter said, 'No! You are the wrong person!' Then, he walked towards the gate. However, another female servant saw her and said to people, 'This man is a friend of Jesus!' Peter said, 'I do not know Jesus!' One man said, 'You are a follower of Jesus! From your accent, I know you are a Galilean, like Jesus. 'But Peter swore, 'I do not know him! '.*

After denial Him three times, at that moment, the cock crowed. It is like Jesus said that "Before the cock crows, you will three times admit that you do not know me." In this condition, Jesus still tolerates what Peter did, even already reminded. Jesus had reminded Peter of all of these things. It will happen to Peter. However, Peter denied the warning. Even so, Jesus was still tolerant of this attitude of denial. He did not hate Peter. He still loves him.

Thomas, Didymus, or doubting is famous for having doubted the resurrection of Jesus. He demands physical proof of the wounds of Christ's Crucifixion. The phrase "doubting Thomas" was coined for his lack of faith. The biblical story of the doubting apostle Thomas concerns the nature and relationship of physical evidence and spiritual belief<sup>24</sup>. (Ardolino, 2012, p. 108) He declared that he would not believe in the resurrection unless he saw and touched Christ's wounds<sup>25</sup>. (Ardolino, 2012, p. 108)

*24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus[a]), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" However, he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." 26 A week later, his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then he said to*

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<sup>23</sup> McEleney, N. J. (1990). Peter's Denials—How Many? To Whom? *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 3, 467–472.

<sup>24</sup> Ardolino, F. R. (2012). Miller's Use of "Doubting Thomas" in "The Crucible." *Penn State University Press*, Vol. 7, No. 1/2 (fall 2012), 107–112.

<sup>25</sup> Ardolino, F. R. (2012). Miller's Use of "Doubting Thomas" in "The Crucible." *Penn State University Press*, Vol. 7, No. 1/2 (fall 2012), 107–112.

*Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." 28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20: 24-28)*

Jesus can tolerate Thomas's doubt by showed him the wounds<sup>26</sup>. (Gash, 2015, p. 8) He did not judge, scold, or belittle Thomas's qualities as a disciple. Jesus was tolerant, willing to understand these doubts. Which then gives a statement affirming that "blessed are those who believe, even though they do not see." Here a very high tolerance can be seen clearly. Jesus was willing to accept the reality and reconcile Thomas's doubts into a belief.

## CONCLUSION

After discussing tolerance in Christianity and its limits, we know that Christian tolerance base on Christ's teaching and principle. That is the first and the second comment. Love our Lord, and then love our neighbor. Tolerate them by love, first and second principle. And the limit even difficult still there. Firstly, those are tolerant because God, therefore, cannot do the things that are again God, and tolerance does not mean allowing evil. Being tolerant does not let the sin happened. For more example is like what Jesus did in His life. He tolerates His disciple by spreading love. He reminds them, but they deny it—this is the tolerance by practicing in life. Thus, as Christian, people trust in Christ. The congregational of the Church can adopt this principle of tolerance in their life and society.

## THE CONCEPT OF TOLERANCE IN ISLAM

The term tolerance is most widely interpreted as an attitude not to fuss about differences that are sometimes not following one's habits. In a religious context, religious tolerance is interpreted as an attitude to refrain from differences between religions and prioritize mutual respect. In a more straightforward language, tolerance can perceive as "the conditional acceptance of or non-interference with beliefs, actions or practices that one considers wrong but still "tolerable", such that they should not be prohibited or constrained"<sup>27</sup> (Forst, 2004). It is a condition where there are things that feel like they are not right but are still acceptable, so they do not need to be prevented or prohibited, such as when people have to be tolerant when the

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<sup>26</sup> Gash, J. (2015). Spadarino's "Doubting Thomas" rediscovered. *Burlington Magazine Publications Ltd*, Vol. 157, No. 1351 (October 2015), 678–681.

<sup>27</sup> Forst, R. (2004). The Limits of Toleration. *Constellations*, 11(3), 312–325.

streets become very congested when there is a celebration of a significant religious ritual in an area. This understanding has a more pejorative meaning when compared to definitions in various normative perspectives, which include the following:

In general, tolerance in Arabic is often translated as "*tasamuh*", even though the two words, in my opinion, do not have the same meaning. In language, the word "*tasamuh*", *إحاة* or *امح*. *tasamuh* means to overlook, excuse, tolerate, be indulgent, tolerant, forbearing, lenient, and merciful. The word "*tasamuh*" has meaning *hilm* and *nasabul*, meaning indulgence, tolerance, tolerance, forbearance, leniency, lenient, clemency, mercy, and kindness<sup>28</sup> (Baalbaki, 2004). In the Al Munawwir Dictionary, the word *tasamuh* interpret as "an open-minded attitude in dealing with differences that originate."

In Islam, the word *tasamuh* does not have the same meaning as the word tolerance because in the word *tasamuh* it means "to give" and "to take." *Tasamuh* has meaning as an act of giving and receiving at the same time. People doing "tasamuh" are called "*mutasamihin*" which means "forgiver, taker, offerer, giver as host to guest." In other words, the attitude of "*tasamuh*" in religion means "not to violate the rules, especially concerning the faith"<sup>29</sup> (Adeng Muchtar Ghazali, 2014). Even so, this word considers as best to represents the concept of tolerance in Islam.

In practice, one of the most prominent Islamic religious organizations in Indonesia, Nahdhatul Ulama, uses the term "tasamuh," along with two other words, namely: "tawazun" (balance) and "tawasuth" (being in the middle) translated as moderate<sup>30</sup> (Abdusshomad, 2009). All three are concepts from the teachings of Ahlusunnah wal Jama'ah, which encourage Muslims not to act excessively, both in aspects of faith or daily life.

The word tolerance indeed invites various meanings, from the most minimalistic, moderate, to maximum meanings. The most straightforward understanding, for example, is to be patient with a temporary disturbance while continuing to strive for the intolerable disturbance to disappear. Alternatively, in a moderate sense, where tolerance is interpreted as an attitude of indifference when someone is in a superior position, they feel unaffected by a disturbance in religious life, such as the act of being willing to "respect" the opinions of others while continuing to emphasize the truth in oneself. Furthermore, maximum tolerance explains as respect as in the

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<sup>28</sup> Baalbaki, R. (2004). *Al-Mawrid: A Modern Arabic English Dictionary*. Beirut: Dar El Ilm Lil Malayin.

<sup>29</sup> Ghazali, Adeng Muchtar. (2014). The Concept of Tolerance in the Islamic Education. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 1(1), 82–97.

<sup>30</sup> Abdusshomad, M. (2009). Karakter Tawassuth, Tawazun, I'tidal, dan Tasamuh dalam Aswaja. *Islam.Nu.or.Id*.

previous sense, but the difference is that respect is born from acknowledging one's limitations, knowledge of the truth, and the possibility that there is equal validity from different points of view.

#### THE CONCEPT OF TOLERANCE IN AL-QURAN

Many Muslim commentators and non-Muslim commentators cite different verses of the Quran to arrive at different conclusions about how Islam views tolerance. The Qur'an provides many arguments for formulating various ethical attitudes of how Muslims should treat people of other faiths, and this, in turn, creates complex social relationships and institutions. For example, to explain how far the tolerance limit of Muslims to non-Muslims in an Islamic State is, some Fiqh Experts must divide the *Kafir* into four groups: First, *Kafir Harbi* means infidels in war are hostile to the Muslims. Second, *Kafir Dzimmi* means infidels who live among the Muslims under the rule of the Muslims. Third, *Kafir Mua'ahad* means an infidel who is in agreement with the Muslims for a particular time. Fourth, *Kafir Must'aman* is an infidel whose safety guaranteed by Muslims)<sup>31</sup> (Mursyid, 2016). From all, it seems that the policy on how to relate between religions has become very rigid.

However, the interpretation of the Qur'an, the spectrum of the meaning of tolerance in the Qur'an becomes not only soft but also has a comprehensive spectrum. Here, the author reviews some opinions of Indonesian commentators on the verses of the Qur'an related to the concept of tolerance.

#### INTERPRETATION OF AL-QURAN VERSES ON TOLERANCE IN INDONESIAN CONTEXT

Theological studies on tolerance have been very abundant, so the author chooses to review the study of tolerance in the Quran from various Indonesian commentators. It is challenging to find precisely the concept of tolerance in the Qur'an. In the context of religious tolerance, usually, the interpreters or researchers will refer to various themes related to the relationship of Islam with other religions, especially some of the religions mentioned in the Qur'an, such as Christianity, Judaism, or even Magi. The author begins with how the "Team of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia" is grouped into three groups of verses related to Islam and other religions in "Tafsir Al-Quran Thematic: Inter-Religious Relations," which compile in 2007.

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<sup>31</sup> Mursyid, S. (2016). Umat Beragama Perspektif Islam. *Islam and Plurality*, 2(1), 368–369.

The first group is the verses of the Qur'an that explain freedom of religion, namely: Surah Al-Baqarah (2) verse 256; Surah Yunus (10) verses 99 – 10; Surah Al Kahf (18) verse 6; Surah Fatir (35) verse 8.

The second group is a form of respect for followers of other religions, including Surah Al-Hajj (22) verse 40. Surah Al An'am (6) verse 108 explains the prohibition against insulting symbols of other religions. Surah Al Mumtahanah (6) verse 8 – 9 allows working with people of other religions. Surah Al Maidah (5) verse 5 justifies marrying a woman of the book expert; Surah Al Imron (3) verse 43 to seek the same view, in this verse uses the word "Kalimatus sawa" as a form of respect for other religions. Surah Al Kafirun (109) verses 1-6 emphasizes not to mix up faith.

The third group is verses that show the principle of brotherhood, especially in Surah Al Hujurat (49) verse 13 and Surah An Nisa (4) verse 1, which emphasizes the brotherhood of humanity<sup>32</sup> (Dinata, 2012). The grouping of these verses can understand the form of tolerance of Muslims about how they position themselves with other religious traditions.

The effort to prepare the thematic interpretation of the product from the Ministry of Religious Affairs shows the government's efforts to build a religious knowledge base to stabilize the lives of religious communities in Indonesia. It considers the high cases of conflicts between religious communities, the emergence of transnational religious movements, to cases of terrorism in Indonesia. Therefore, a moderate religious understanding begins with how religious communities, especially Islam, have a solid theological basis for tolerating religious life.

Zuhairi Misrawi, an Indonesian Muslim scholar, discussed specifically tolerance from an Islamic perspective. He even called the Koran the Book of Tolerance. Zuhairi Misrawi explains that it is pretty complicated to find the theme of tolerance in the Qur'an. As usual, the word used to describe "*Tasamuh*" is the concept of tolerance in Islam. This word is not found in the Quran explicitly. Therefore, according to Zuhairi Misrawi, if what is meant by tolerance is mutual respect, acceptance, and respect for cultural diversity and differences in expression, the Qur'an provides many arguments about tolerance<sup>33</sup> (Misrawi, 2007). Therefore, Misrawi collected more than 300 verses that describe the various forms of tolerance found in the Qur'an.

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<sup>32</sup> Dinata, M. R. (2012). Konsep Toleransi Beragama Dalam Tafsir Al-Qur'an Tematik Karya Tim Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia. *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin*, 13(1), 85.

<sup>33</sup> Misrawi, Z. (2007). *Al-Quran Kitab Toleransi*. Jakarta Selatan: Penerbit Fitrah.

However, several verses are pretty famous in explaining tolerance, such as the following verses.

First, the verse that shows that the Qur'an has the intention to find similarities to be upheld together, namely in Surah Al Imran (3) verse 64:

*"O People of the Book! Come to the standard terms as between them and us. That we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves. Lords and patrons other than Allah. "If then they turn back, say ye: "bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's Will)."*

The sentence "Kalimatus Sawa" has become a matter of debate among commentators. According to Hamka, the word "common terms" refers to the sentence that follows "we worship none but Allah." Based on that argument, Hamka was why the Prophet Muhammad sent a letter to the Roman King Heraclius to worship Allah <sup>34</sup>(Hamka, 2015). This interpretation is how Islam says that Christianity has a close tradition with Islam, which both know Allah and the previous Arab belief traditions. It is similar to the interpretation of the Quraish Shihab, who wanted to show how big the seriousness of the Prophet Muhammad so that Jews and Christians accepted the invitation of Islam. The invitation showed by a sympathetic and gentle call, namely the use of the greeting "O... People of The Book," where Islam acknowledges that Allah has bestowed holy books on them. However, Quraish Shihab added in his commentary that this verse also shows that although there are differences in belief between Islam and the two religions, they recognize each other and welcome them to carry out their respective beliefs (Shihab, 2008). At this point, Quraish Shihab had a more progressive view than Hamka.

In addition to the two Indonesian commentators, in a more inclusive perspective, Nurcholish Madjid, one of the Indonesian Muslim scientists, translated "*Kalimatus Sawa*" as "religious meeting point" or common platform, where the concept of salvation is not only based on one particular religious tradition but the nature of the form of "submission to God." Furthermore, Budi Munawar Rahman and Zuhairi Misrawi place the concept of "Kalimatus Sawa" as a religious concept and a state concept by interpreting it as "Pancasila," a common platform contains values that are aspired together for an ideal life order. (Rachman, 2010).

Based on these various interpretations, the concept of "Kalimatus Sawa" has developed meaning. If previously it only referred to the concept of faith, namely Belief in God, when placed in a broader and plural context, this meaning becomes a state concept. It is fascinating how the

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<sup>34</sup> Hamka. (2015). *Tafsir Al Azhar*. Jakarta: Gema Insani.

reinterpretation of the verses of the Qur'an can help Muslims to understand the relationship between religious communities.

Second, the verse that explains the concept of "for you is your religion and for me my religion," Surah Al Kafirun (109) verse 6.

This verse is used as a limit to the attitude of tolerance, that it emphasized that differences in faith cannot be united. Hamka called it "Tawhid and *Syirik* cannot be met" (Hamka, 2015). The strong statement Qur'an base on the background of the revelation of the verse (asbababun nuzul) that the *Mushrikin* invites to exchange. God said

*"Come follow our religion, and we will follow yours. You worship our idols for a year, and we worship you Allah the following year. In this way, if what you have brought us is better than what we have, we would partake of it and take our share of goodness from it; and if what we have is better than what you have brought, you would partake of it and take your share of goodness from it"*(Al-Wahidi & Guezzou, 2008).

Therefore, the same thing also conveys by Quraish Shihab in interpreting the verse. Although with a more inclusive point of view than Hamka. Quraish Shihab not only emphasizes that the Qur'an does not tolerate mixing one creed with another but also that the Qur'an acknowledges the existence of other religions. Thus, the Qur'an invites people of other religions to carry out their beliefs and teachings. Each party can carry out what is considered right and good without forcing the truth on others at the same time without ignoring their respective beliefs<sup>35</sup> (Shihab, 2008).

However, in practice, Surah Al Kafirun is often used to show tolerance limits between Islam and other religions. For example, the Fatwa of the Indonesian Ulema Council No. 56 of 2016 concerning the Law on the Use of Non-Muslim Religious Attributes states that using some of the symbols of other religions is forbidden. MUI mentions several arguments from the Koran used as the basis for the fatwa, Surah Al Kafirun verses 1-6. The fatwa sets in response to the widespread use of Sinterklaas costumes worn by Muslims during Christmas celebrations, especially in malls, supermarkets, and other entertainment centers.

Third, Al-Quran Surah Al Maidah (5) verse 48, a verse that explains various religions with one goal, namely:

*To you We sent the scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety; so judge between them by what God has revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the truth that has come to you. To each among you have*

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<sup>35</sup> Shihab, M. Q. (2008). *Tafsir al-Misbah, Pesan, Kesan dan Keserasian al-Qur'an Vol II*. Jakarta: Lentera Hati.

*We prescribed a law and an open way. If God had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but [His plan is] to test you in what He has given you: so strive as in a race in all the virtues. The goal of you all is to God; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which you differ. (Qur'an 5:48)*

According to Hashmi, this verse is the best in summarizing the various forms of tolerance that appear in the Qur'an. There is an acknowledgment of various beliefs, to begin with, "Islamic Ethics on Tolerance" in verse. In interpreting this verse, Hashmi explains the dynamics of Islam and non-Muslims in two different conditions, namely in Mecca and Medina. There is a division of verses of the Koran called the Makkiyah Letter (revealed in Mecca) and the Medina letter (revealed in the city of Medina). Both are distinguished not based on the letter's content but from the audience (listeners) where the verse reveals. This verse has almost all forms of tolerance from this uniqueness, from the most minimalist, moderate, to the maximum.

Hashmi argues three forms of tolerance in Surah Al Maidah verse 48, minimalistic, medium, and maximally tolerant. The first is the most minimal form of tolerance. Since the opening of the verse, it stated that Allah had revealed His books. In the Qur'an, there is the greeting "*Ya Abla Kitab*:" "*O The People of the Book*," namely those who receive Allah's revelation, usually referring to Christian and Jewish religious traditions. At this point, the Qur'an narrows the relationship with other religions to the recipients of the book because it is considered closer in religious tradition than those who worship idols.

To explain the relationship between Islam and previous religions, Abdul Muqsih Ghazali mentions that many classical commentators have interpreted the word "*Muhaiminan alaihi*" in this verse. Qatadah stated *muhaimin* means martyr (witness). Muhammad Nawawi Al Jawi approved Qatadah's opinion. It shows that the Qur'an, as the last revelation, places itself as a witness to the teachings of the prophets before the Prophet Muhammad. Other commentators argue, *muhaimin* means al hafidz (guard). That is, the Qur'an came down to maintain the continuity and continuity of the previous teachings. Meanwhile, al-Hasan stated that *Muhaimin* means *mushaddiq* (justification), the Qur'an confirms the teachings contained in previous books, such as the Torah, the Bible, and the Zabur<sup>36</sup>. (Abdul Muqsih Ghazali, 2009).

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<sup>36</sup> Ghazali, Abdul Muqsih. (2009). *Argumen Pluralisme Agama Membangun Toleransi Berbasis Al Quran*. Jakarta: Kata Kita.



Second, the form of medium tolerance, in that verse, there is a somewhat contradictory understanding, especially with the use of the terms "*shir'a*" and "*Minhaj*." The attitude of the Qur'an to Arabs who have polytheistic beliefs is more challenging than the people of the book. It is because polytheism is considered their fault for worshiping idols (Sura Yunus verse 99). The difference between Islam and the People of the Book is a necessity created by Allah. The Qur'an explains that it is Allah who created humans to have different ways (*Syir'a*) and ways (*Minhaj*). Nevertheless, many classical scholars assert that Islam is the last revelation that completes and perfects God's teachings.

With a more inclusive interpretation, the concepts of '*shir'a*' and '*minhaj*' refer to ways of performing rituals. Even more broadly, Surah Al Maidah verse 48 talks about the concept of faith and an attempt to discuss how to reach the actual truth. Therefore this verse is a possibility that there is only one truth, but there are many ways to get there. Tabari, in his interpretation, expressed as quoted by Hashmi that "all religion (*din*) is one, but that the specific rules, norms, guidelines, laws (*shari'a*) for each community may vary" (Thabari, 1997). This motivation is sufficient to build tolerance between religious communities. Although, of course, it is not only the community of scribes as objects in this inter-religious relationship, in a broad and plural context, the statement "*If God had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but [His plan is] to test you in what He has given you*" shows that differences are a necessity.

Third, the form of tolerance is more advanced than the previous two. At the end of this verse, Surah Al Maidah verse 48 provides a metaphor for competing in the sentence "*fastabiqul khairaat*" namely "*so strive as in a race in all the virtues*." In the Indonesian translation of "Race competition in goodness," there is a more inclusive meaning in this section where God refers to one religious group inviting for good; however, each community with various traditions and rituals leads to the same goal. The goal is not only to focus on this verse. The journey to goodness is the process to pursue. So, "the race" is not about conflicts between religions to show which one is the most correct. The Qur'an affirms that religious differences are not a problem to be resolved, but rather it is an advantage to be embraced together.

The humblest interpretation of this verse is that they cannot claim the only truth in this worldly life, just as they cannot claim "salvation" in the afterlife. Thus, they cannot monopolize the truth. The Quran does show the truth, but it is only the beginning of the search process. At this stage, tolerance has maximum meaning, it is not enough to hold back in differences, or there should be no feeling. The difference is a necessity that becomes an advantage to compete with each other to pursue goodness.

## CONCLUSION

After reviewing various interpretations of the verses of the Qur'an that explain how Islam is related to other religions, it is difficult to conclude what forms and limits of tolerance are in the Qur'an. Again, it is up to the commentators or other Islamic scholars to quote and draw interpretations. Nevertheless, the Qur'an provides the broadest opportunity for interpretation, especially in the three verses described previously. Interpretation of the Quran can be very rigid and, at the same time, very inclusive of even a single verse. Some verses will clearly explain that the limit of tolerance between religious communities is *aqidah*, that it is not allowed to mix different *aqidah* (Al Kafirun verse 6). This opinion can interpret narrowly or broadly as MUI interprets it to the level that it is not allowed to use other religious attributes. However, on the other hand, Quraish Shihab emphasizes the recognition of Islam for the existence of other religions and efforts to implement each other's teachings according to their respective beliefs. Likewise, the verse shows that differences are God's creations, so they should be grateful instead of considering them as problems.

Both Christianity and Islam recognize tolerance in their teaching. In this assessment, we cannot deny that interpretations differ from one another, either in Christianity or Islam. But, from it, we learn one thing that there is a common principle to be good. Christianity and Muslims are well aware that differences are a necessity. Consequently, it tolerate us doing good in our beliefs in the diversity that exists, especially in Indonesian society, which has always been plural, both in culture, language and religion. Tolerance becomes an advantage to compete with each other in the pursuit of goodness.

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