

Jesus Christ as Social Philosopher: The Inclusive Sociability and Its Implications for Christians in Indonesia

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Abstract

In a nation of diverse beliefs like Indonesia, there can never be enough discourse on articulating ways to pursue peace. This article proposes that reimagining Jesus Christ as a social philosopher with inclusive sociability is crucial in motivating Christians' social attitudes in public spheres in Indonesia. As the central figure of the Christian faith, this constructive imagination is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where the "what would Jesus do" religiosity is prominent. To analyse and construct Jesus as a social philosopher with inclusive sociability, this article utilises two approaches: content analysis and conversation analysis. The research finds that, as a social philosopher, Jesus exhibits a capacity for critical reasoning accompanied by a humanising attitude. This is evident in how He interacts across cultures, accepts sociocultural differences, and embodies unconditional love, unlimited forgiveness, and selfless humility. This research presents a critical model for Indonesian Christians to pursue friendships and relational harmony amidst differences, based on an ethic of empathy.

Keywords: Christians; Inclusive Sociability; Indonesia; Jesus Christ; Social Philosopher

Abstrak

Di negara dengan beragam kepercayaan seperti Indonesia, tidak akan pernah ada wacana yang cukup untuk mengartikulasikan cara-cara untuk mengupayakan perdamaian. Artikel ini mengusulkan bahwa membayangkan kembali Yesus Kristus sebagai filsuf sosial yang memiliki kemampuan bersosialisasi yang inklusif sangat penting untuk memotivasi sikap sosial orang Kristen di ruang publik di Indonesia. Sebagai tokoh sentral dalam iman Kristen, imajinasi konstruktif ini sangat relevan di Indonesia, di mana religiositas "apa yang akan dilakukan

Yesus” sangat menonjol. Untuk menganalisis dan mengkonstruksi Yesus sebagai filsuf sosial dengan kemampuan bersosialisasi yang inklusif, artikel ini menggunakan dua pendekatan: analisis isi dan analisis percakapan. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa, sebagai seorang filsuf sosial, Yesus menunjukkan kemampuan untuk berpikir kritis yang disertai dengan sikap memanusiaikan manusia. Hal ini terlihat dari bagaimana Ia berinteraksi lintas budaya, menerima perbedaan sosiokultural, dan mewujudkan kasih tanpa syarat, pengampunan tanpa batas, dan kerendahan hati tanpa pamrih. Penelitian ini menyajikan sebuah model kritis bagi orang Kristen Indonesia untuk mengupayakan persahabatan dan keharmonisan hubungan di tengah-tengah perbedaan, yang didasarkan pada etika empati.

Kata Kunci: Kristen; Pergaulan Inklusif; Indonesia; Yesus Kristus; Filsuf Sosial

1. Introduction

Indonesia is a nation-state characterised by a high degree of diversity. This diversity is reflected not only in its sociocultural landscape but also in the presence of multiple religious traditions. In other words, various religions coexist within the country, with adherents living as neighbours despite their differing beliefs. Nevertheless, tensions may arise when religions maintain an exclusive attitude. Religious conflicts persist, particularly when certain groups incite social discord or offend the religious sentiments of others through their actions or words.

Even today, Christians of certain traditions are still exclusive when they meet others. Exclusiveness occurs when dealing with other and ancestral religions.¹ That arises because the paradigm still considers others as strangers, not neighbours. Certain church denominations adhere more to the metaphysical truths of their religion, thus showing less of an inclusive social sense.

Although the metaphysics of religions is different and peculiar, there is always room for social life in a world of sociocultural diversity, especially in Indonesia. The issue of metaphysics will always be there, but that does not mean it closes the possibility of realising love for others. Although each has the truth of their beliefs, communities are still responsible for doing good, loving and supporting each other as the fundamental nature of daily life.²

Various studies have been conducted to bridge existing tensions by building dialogue, harmony, and solidarity. Many previous studies have attempted to explain interfaith peacebuilding efforts in Indonesia by emphasising interfaith collaboration and cultural traditions. From a Christian perspective, Linna Gunawan attempted to explain the role of *nasi*

¹ Ramadhanita Mustika Sari, ‘Resolusi Konflik Islam-Kristen Perspektif Al-Qur’an Dan Injil’, *Al-Adyan Journal of Religious Studies* 3, no. 1 (2022): 9–18, <https://doi.org/10.15548/al-adyan.v3i1.4087>; Vikry Reinaldo Paais, ‘Antara Eksklusif Dan Pluralis: Rekonstruksi Narasi Kekristenan Atas Agama Leluhur’, *ARUMBAE: Jurnal Ilmiah Teologi Dan Studi Agama* 4, no. 1 (2022): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.37429/arumbae.v4i1.736>.

² Otniel Aurelius Nole and Mariska Lauterboom, ‘Potensi Pendidikan Interreligius Meminimalkan Hate Speech Di Media Sosial’, *Panangkaran: Jurnal Penelitian Agama Dan Masyarakat* 8, no. 1 (2024): 123–46, <https://doi.org/10.14421/panangkaran.v8i1.3786>.

tumpeng as a cultural tradition of eating that creates interfaith dialogue to build peace.³ Furthermore, Emanuel Gerrit Singgih argued that Christians can practice religious moderation for mutual peace amid diversity.⁴ Then, Amos Sukanto also saw the importance of building Indonesia based on interfaith collaboration, namely Muslim and Christian interaction.⁵ Furthermore, Septemmy E. Lakawa explained efforts to build peace by practising interfaith friendship based on the perspective of feminist theology.⁶ Instead of seeing interfaith collaboration and cultural traditions as the only approach, this research highlights another unique perspective: the use of philosophy. Therefore, this research also supports previous studies with different contributions and emphases to complement each other.

Philosophical frameworks build peace when Christians understand and emulate their primary role model, Jesus Christ, as a social philosopher. However, Emmanuel Bassey Eyo, as a philosopher, is surprised that philosophers and scholars who examine Jesus' teachings from a philosophical perspective are rare due to the assumption that his teachings fall within the scope of religion and theology.⁷ Moreover, the discussion of the philosophy of Jesus still needs a lot of attention in the Indonesian context, especially with regard to the contribution of research to the advancement of the social context of Indonesian society. At the same time, Jesus is a figure whose teachings significantly contribute to building peace in Indonesia. More research is needed to explain Jesus philosophically.

The reason for the Jesus figure is that Jesus is a central figure for the Christian faith in Indonesia, just as a leader's example can influence the quality of followers' behaviour. Jesus is the centre and core of the Christian faith. His teachings, life, and example are the foundation for the beliefs and practices of Christians around the world, including in Indonesia.⁸ Therefore, by focusing on Jesus, this research has direct relevance for Indonesian Christians, as they believe in Jesus as a source of role models and guidelines for life. By understanding Jesus as an inclusive social philosopher, Christians can be more actively involved in efforts for peace, tolerance, social justice, harmony, and interfaith dialogue in Indonesia.

The endeavour to investigate Jesus as a social philosopher is an encouragement to understand His teachings philosophically-ethically and apply them. The figure that Christians worship is one who strongly emphasises human values. Jesus' humanity moves creation to

³ Linna Gunawan, 'Building Peace in Indonesia Through the Tradition of Eating Nasi Tumpeng', *Theologia in Loco* 5, no. 2 (2023): 110–138, <https://doi.org/10.55935/thilo.v5i2.295>.

⁴ Emanuel Gerrit Singgih, 'Religious Moderation as Good Life: Two Responses to the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Directive on Religious Moderation in Indonesia', *Exchange* 52, no. 3 (2023): 220–40, <https://doi.org/10.1163/1572543X-bja10038>.

⁵ Amos Sukanto, 'Muslim-Christian Relations and Collaborative Efforts to Build Indonesia', *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 46, no. 4 (2022): 525–39, <https://doi.org/10.1177/23969393211058904>.

⁶ Septemmy E. Lakawa, 'Aftermath Friendship: An Indonesian Feminist Theological Perspective on Trauma and Interreligious Peace', *International Journal of Asian Christianity* 4, no. 2 (2021): 236–47, <https://doi.org/10.1163/25424246-04020006>.

⁷ Emmanuel Bassey Eyo, 'Jesus Christ the Philosopher: An ExPosé', *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology (IJPT)* 7, no. 2 (2019): 20, <https://doi.org/10.15640/ijpt.v7n2p2>.

⁸ Meki Mulait, 'Mengimani Yesus Kristus Sang Pembebas: Suatu Upaya Berkristologi Dalam Konteks Pemiskinan Gereja Indonesia', *Studia Philosophica et Theologica* 18, no. 1 (2018): 71–91, <https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v18i1.24>.

explore what it means to be human and to realise humanising practices in wondrous ways. More than that, Jesus embodies humanity that is always connected to divinity.⁹ Jesus manifests His ethics in His way of life with perfect continuity between words and actions.¹⁰ In this sense, Jesus is God who practices human values directly and shows how to live them. For instance, even Christianity strongly affirms the significance of the law to love God, which is also to love His creation.¹¹ Christians believe in a great figure, Jesus, who emphasises good morals.

The urgency of this research lies in offering an alternative philosophical perspective on the values of inclusiveness demonstrated by Jesus and their applicability in the contemporary context of Indonesia's pluralistic society. Jesus' inclusiveness is profoundly influential in modelling ethical and empathetic harmonious relationships. Thus, this research aims to build upon this perspective by emphasising the values of inclusivity as demonstrated through Jesus' actions. The goal is to provide a critical reference for Christians to serve as agents of transformative and positive social change in Indonesia.

The authors argue that Jesus is a social philosopher with inclusive sociability relevant to the context of a plural society and strongly motivates the participation of Christians in Indonesia. So, how does interpreting Jesus as an inclusive social philosopher have implications for the practices of Christian life in a multicultural context in Indonesia? Building on that question, this article aims to analyse Jesus as a social philosopher to demonstrate His inclusive sociability and show the implications for Christians in Indonesia.

This research demonstrates novelty and confirms that peace is alive and well when Christians focus on how the nature and actions of Jesus humanise people. Christians have complete faith in Jesus as both God and man. He interacted openly with people from different backgrounds and helped the weak and marginalised. Philosophically, He had a sociability that emphasised non-exclusive human relations. The view of the social philosopher is an idea to explain Jesus in the Indonesian context. The belief that Jesus is a social philosopher is very appropriate for the social situation in Indonesia.

2. Method

This article used a qualitative method based on two approaches, namely content analysis and conversation analysis. The authors employed content analysis and conversation analysis on certain biblical texts relevant to the research purpose. The authors used these two approaches to investigate some texts in the Gospels that relate to the inclusive sociability of Jesus Christ.

⁹ Bruce A. Ware, *The Man Christ Jesus: Theological Reflections on the Humanity of Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013).

¹⁰ Runar M. Thorsteinsson, *Jesus as Philosopher: The Moral Sage in the Synoptic Gospels* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 101.

¹¹ Otniel Aurelius Nole, 'Hidup Adalah Kasih: Perjumpaan Antara Karya Yesus Kristus Dan Orang Mamasa', *Pengarah: Jurnal Teologi Kristen* 5, no. 2 (2023): 109–18, <https://doi.org/10.36270/pengarah.v5i2.175>.

Content analysis signifies an attempt to examine the messages embedded in texts.¹² Conversely, conversation analysis is an attempt to analyse various conversations that indicate the interaction of encounters and dialogues in texts.¹³ The authors also used various references in books and scientific articles related to the research variables to support these two approaches.

To mapped out Jesus' inclusive sociability, the authors explored certain narratives in the Gospels that represent Jesus' social values and care amid diversity philosophically. The authors did not conduct a hermeneutic study or a comparative study between the stories in the Gospels but rather explained Jesus' behaviour based on the two approaches above. After analysing the data, the authors discussed it philosophically, specifically about ethics.

In what follows, the authors first explained Jesus as a social philosopher. Secondly, the authors highlighted specific stories in the Gospels that related to Jesus' inclusive engagement in a socioculturally diverse environment. Thirdly, the authors drew the implications for modern Christian engagement in the Indonesian context. Finally, the authors concluded this article.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Jesus Christ the Social Philosopher

Humans are born with hearts and minds to live their lives. Through these two powers, humans are called philosophers. Nevertheless, humans must develop and prove their strength to contribute and influence life to validate this designation. Then, the criteria for being called a philosopher is the primary determinant. The main criteria for a human being to be called a philosopher is if the individual is wise and has rational, critical, logical, and unique thoughts.¹⁴ In this regard, Jesus Christ also has these main criteria, as well as having unique characteristics.¹⁵ He is also a unique philosopher who historically sits between the Western and Eastern philosophical traditions. Although Jesus seems to be on par with other philosophers, He is superior to them in every aspect, and He is the ideal human being.¹⁶

Jesus could solve problems and provide answers that were both sensible and applicable. Although He knew the answers and the truth from a divine perspective, Jesus often asked questions and encouraged doubt. In essence, the characteristic that distinguishes Jesus from other philosophers, both in the Western and Eastern traditions, is that He possessed wisdom with thinking that involved a balance between the rational and the emotional. According to Garrett J. DeWeese, we can see the nature of the philosopher Jesus by looking at two dimensions of depiction in the Gospels, essentially the style and focus of His teachings and the

¹² Diane M. Badzinski, Robert H. Woods Jr., and Chad M. Nelson, 'Content Analysis', in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Steven Engler and Michael Stausberg, 2nd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022), 180, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003222491-13>.

¹³ Esa Lehtinen, 'Conversation Analysis', in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, ed. Steven Engler and Michael Stausberg, 2nd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022), 196, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003222491-14>.

¹⁴ Otniel Aurelius Nole, 'Tuhan, Manusia, Dan Bahasa Menurut Ludwig Wittgenstein: Suatu Tinjauan Filsafat Agama', *Sanjiwani: Jurnal Filsafat* 14, no. 2 (2023): 162–73, <https://doi.org/10.25078/sjf.v14i2.2579>.

¹⁵ Travis Dickinson, *Logic and the Way of Jesus: Thinking Critically and Christianly* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2022); Eyo, 'Jesus Christ the Philosopher: An ExPosé'.

¹⁶ Thorsteinsson, *Jesus as Philosopher: The Moral Sage in the Synoptic Gospels*, 3–184.

use of reasoned argument.¹⁷ Each Gospel certainly has its authorship, but the point is that they proclaim the similarity of Jesus' social actions that value the existence of marginalised people with different backgrounds. In addition, when debating, He had an exceptional ability to address issues logically, such as when discussing the Sabbath with the Pharisees and the resurrection with the Sadducees. Jesus' greatness was seen when He helped the weak when the general public was unfamiliar with doing so. Therefore, DeWeese continues by stating that the Gospels present Jesus as a wise man, a teacher of wisdom, and a moral example who inspires people to undergo complete transformation.¹⁸

The orientation of Jesus' thinking is not merely self-interest but the common good. Although the Gospels have their theological emphases, they simultaneously portray Jesus as a figure who cares much about others. Other philosophers said too much but not enough to realise what was said. In contrast, Jesus uttered many constructive words and transformed them into the utility of deeds. He is the greatest philosopher of all time. Thoughts on leadership, conflict resolution, and peace construction characterise Jesus' social philosophy.¹⁹

Christians believe that Jesus has a divine side but also has a human side to practise what it means to be a righteous human being. God is indeed unreachable because He is transcendent. Nevertheless, Jesus, who is transcendent, is also immanent, which can be understood and approached. William C. Spohn emphasises that the perception in Christian faith is that, firstly, faith frames every experience in the context of God's gracious work, trusting that God continues to bless the world with His power, and secondly, that faith highlights the importance of a compassionate vision, as Jesus demonstrated and taught.²⁰ Jesus' existence and actions show humans the harmonious relationship between the creator and creation. Peter Kreeft explains that Jesus philosophically teaches humans to treat others with a humanist answer, and He is the answer who practices it in the public sphere.²¹ Then, Jonathan T. Pennington also explains that Jesus, as a philosopher, not only talks about religious and spiritual aspects (vertical) but also teaches all horizontal dimensions of human life.²²

The three most memorable social actions in Jesus' practice are unconditional love, unlimited forgiveness, and selfless humility. These social actions imply a noble activity, namely social transformation, for a prosperous life in the world. Paul Bharathi understands Jesus as a transformative figure who transforms the actions of others into more meaningful ones. Furthermore, Bharathi asserts that Jesus has a transformative role in leading life and has the power to transform people into extraordinary.²³ Jesus had a high sense of humanity towards the existence of others.

¹⁷ Garrett J. DeWeese, *Doing Philosophy as a Christian* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 106.

¹⁸ DeWeese, 108.

¹⁹ Eyo, 'Jesus Christ the Philosopher: An ExPosé', 24.

²⁰ William C. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 87.

²¹ Peter Kreeft, *The Philosophy of Jesus* (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2007).

²² Jonathan T. Pennington, *Jesus the Great Philosopher: Rediscovering the Wisdom Needed for the Good Life* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2020).

²³ Paul Bharathi, 'Jesus – His Transforming Effect', *International Journal of Indonesian Philosophy & Theology* 2, no. 1 (2021): 10–19, <https://doi.org/10.47043/ijipth.v2i1.16>.

People who met Jesus experienced not only an encounter but also a transformative power. The social actions that Jesus had done became lessons and were used to mobilise the masses into transformative movements.²⁴ Jesus came into the world to compassionately transform and renew, breaking down barriers of impurity, ethnicity, and gender and liberating the oppressed through a ministry of holistic transformation.²⁵ Jesus' transformation contains inclusive sociability that brings common interests, not unilateral ones.

3.2. The Inclusive Sociability of Jesus Christ

The Gospel of John is crucial in demonstrating how Jesus's divinity is concerned with the salvation of human beings. Jesus in John's Gospel shows how He is a God who humanises people. As evidence, there is the story of Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (John 4:1-26). Jews and Samaritans are two large groups with different beliefs and identities, and there is even tension between them due to political interests.²⁶ Although Jesus was Jewish, He was open to talking to a Samaritan; the Samaritan was a woman. Jesus greeted and revealed spiritual truths to her at the well. In this encounter, rejection occurs, but acceptance transforms humanity into truly human.²⁷ Jesus showed His empathy for a woman who transcends ethnic and gender boundaries.

By socialising with women, even with those outside the community, Jesus displayed a defiant attitude towards patriarchal culture. On the other hand, Victor H. Matthews asserts that the encounter between Jesus and a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well serves as a rich narrative to explore themes of identity, cross-cultural dialogue, and inclusive values.²⁸ Two identities with significant differences are not a barrier to building togetherness. The encounter between the two figures negates hostility and realises peace. Jesus showed a more inclusive attitude towards the woman, treating her respectfully and giving her unexpected attention. This also demonstrates that Jesus is simultaneously concerned with genuine human values.

Jesus also emphasised the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). In this text, Jesus shows that love and kindness transcend ethnic and religious differences, using the Samaritan as an example. The example comes from Jesus, who emphasises doing good to strangers. Jesus modelled the figure not from Jewish identity but from the identity of the Samaritan, thus showing how kindness also exists in foreign communities. The example is a metaphor that commands us to go and do the same, namely good neighbourliness.²⁹

²⁴ Gerd Theissen, *Gerakan Yesus: Sebuah Pemahaman Sosiologis Tentang Jemaat Kristen Perdana* (Nita: Penerbit Ledalero, 2005), 1–15.

²⁵ Sheren Angela, Amos Sukanto, and Tri Mulyanti, 'Yesus Antara Zelot Dan Eseni: Konstruksi Teologi Transformatif Dalam Konteks Indonesia', *Jurnal Teologi Berita Hidup* 4, no. 1 (2021): 98, <https://doi.org/10.38189/jtbh.v4i1.180>.

²⁶ Victor H. Matthews, 'Conversation and Identity: Jesus and the Samaritan Woman', *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 40, no. 4 (2010): 221, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146107910380876>.

²⁷ Johnson Thomaskutty, "'Humanhood" in the Gospel of John', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 77, no. 4 (2021): 3, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i4.6643>.

²⁸ Matthews, 'Conversation and Identity: Jesus and the Samaritan Woman', 215–25.

²⁹ Mark A. Proctor, "'Who Is My Neighbor?' Recontextualizing Luke's Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 138, no. 1 (2019): 203–19, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jbl.2019.0011>.

The Jewish community looked down upon and marginalised the Samaritan community, but Jesus placed the Samaritans' status as good people. For instance, Jesus recounted the actions of the Samaritan who cared someone's suffering, took care of the body, brought to an inn, and paid for treatment. Jesus shows that love is not limited to and from a particular group but applies to all people, including those considered other, enemies, or marginalised. On the other hand, the parable reflects a dialogue based on cross-cultural communication.³⁰ Through the example of the 'good Samaritan,' Jesus dismantles sociocultural barriers, emphasising the importance of God's call to help others.³¹ Thus, human values matter more than rules restricting people's movement to do good. God favours an interest, which is the common good.

The social aspect of love is not just about feelings but also concrete actions. The solidarity of the Good Samaritan was not a passive act but an active helper to give hope.³² The Samaritan not only felt pity but took steps to help practically. This story emphasises how differences are not a barrier to people doing good. By placing a Samaritan as the story's hero, Jesus transformed social prejudices and stereotypes into altruistic kindness as an actual social fact. That invites all to keep doing good despite cultural, racial, or religious differences.

There is also the story of Jesus and the Roman soldier (Luke 7:1-10). This story shows the themes of unwavering faith, humility, and openness, as well as how Jesus transcended cultural and social boundaries by honouring the faith of a non-Jew. The Jewish and Greek backgrounds of the Roman Empire indeed showed differences. However, Jesus remained open and sociable with strangers. Although the characteristics of the Roman soldiers were known as violent and oppressive, Jesus still interacted with them by showing that the values of love and faith can transcend social, cultural, and political boundaries.

This story emphasises that faith is not dependent on background or social status. The Roman soldier (centurion), who was not Jewish, had great faith. He trusted Jesus to bring about healing. A Roman centurion asked Jesus to heal his terminally ill servant. Jesus admired this man's faith, who was humble from a different nation. As God, Jesus demonstrated His social nature by healing the servant. The story motivates readers to reflect on struggle and love, God's infinite grace, God's role in responding to problems, and the interplay between relationships and faith in healing.³³ The actions in this story give meaning to the application of love that is not limited by cultural differences.

There is also Jesus' encounter with Levi (Luke 5:27-32) and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). Tax collectors Levi and Zacchaeus were considered sinful by specific communities because of

³⁰ Erastus Sabdono et al., 'Teaching Intercultural Competence: Dialogue, Cognition and Position in Luke 10:25-37', *HTS Theologisches Studies / Theological Studies* 77, no. 4 (2021): 1-8, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v77i4.6744>.

³¹ Larry L. Enis, 'Luke 10:25-37', *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 71, no. 4 (2017): 426, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020964317716134>.

³² Chandra Han, Amos Sukanto, and Rudy Pramono, 'Solidarity in Christianity to Foster "Bhineka Tunggal Ika": A Biblical Analysis of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37', *Pharos Journal of Theology* 104, no. 1 (2022): 25-37, <https://doi.org/10.46222/PHAROSJOT.10418>.

³³ Greg Carey, 'Luke 7:1-10', *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 67, no. 2 (2013): 200-201, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020964312472649>.

their excessive materialism and work for the Roman empire. Tax collectors are viewed negatively because of their one-sided and oppressive interests.³⁴ In this case, tax collectors tended to be seen as sinners. Levi and Zacchaeus experienced rejection from religious people.

Although Levi and Zacchaeus were considered sinners because of their occupations, Jesus did something different by drawing near to them. Levi and Zacchaeus must have felt joy when someone still cared about them, even though many disliked their existence and work. Jesus forgave them and changed their lives, thus showing love to a stranger. The encounter signalled the meaning of building authentic friendships and the actual conversion transformation.³⁵ The encounter renewed their commitment to sharing help and being good people.

Jesus also gives high honour to a woman from Canaan (Matthew 15:21-28). This story depicts a Canaanite woman who had unwavering faith and commitment. Although the Jews considered the Canaanites to be an opposing group due to political history,³⁶ the interaction between Jesus and the woman was precisely the opposite. Jesus made a social connection regarding caring for the woman's sick child.

A Canaanite woman asked Jesus to heal her daughter. Although Jesus initially tested her, He eventually recognised her faith and healed her daughter. Anizah Chelsia and Robi Panggarra understand that a woman's faith depends solely on Jesus' mercy, never giving up, being patient, and surrendering to God's purpose.³⁷ In this story, Melanie S. Baffes emphasises the existence of three forms of love, namely loving oneself (empowering), loving others (sharing), and loving God (connecting).³⁸ This woman had unwavering faith, and Jesus showed that God's love is open to all people, not just within His community. That encourages us to be inclusive and accept strangers as friends, not foes.

Jesus also had a concern for the Blind Beggar (Mark 10:46-52). There was a beggar named Bartimaeus who lived in poverty. In addition, he also had a limited condition with blind eyes. Because of his shortcomings and limitations, he was often by the side of the road. The people told Bartimaeus to be quiet when he learnt that Jesus was around and hoped for healing based on his faith. Jesus approached and healed Bartimaeus, a blind man who asked for help. Bartimaeus was not only physically healed but also followed Jesus after his healing. That illustrates how an encounter with Jesus can completely transform a person's life. The encounter

³⁴ Dieter H. Reinstorf, 'The Rich, the Poor, and the Law', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 60, no. 1-2 (2004): 329-48, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v60i1.2.512>.

³⁵ Yohanes Parihala, 'Making Mega-Space for Others: Towards Theology of Mega-Friendship from the Table Fellowship Story According to Luke 5:27-32', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 42, no. 1 (2021): 1-7, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v42i1.2292>; Patson K. Motuku and Ernest van Eck, 'Justice and Reconciliation in Luke 19:1-10: A South African Post-Apartheid Anti-Imperial Reading', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 45, no. 1 (2024): 1-9, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v45i1.3072>.

³⁶ Nur Masalha, 'Reading the Bible with the Eyes of the Canaanites: Neo-Zionism, Political Theology and the Land Traditions of the Bible (1967 to Gaza 2009)', *Journal of Holy Land and Palestine Studies* 8, no. 1 (2009): 55-108, <https://doi.org/10.3366/E1474947509000407>.

³⁷ Anizah Chelsia and Robi Panggarra, 'Iman Perempuan Kanaan Berdasarkan Kitab Matius 15:21-28', *Jurnal Ilmu Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 1, no. 2 (2020): 123-43, <https://doi.org/10.25278/jitpk.v1i2.511>.

³⁸ Melanie S. Baffes, 'What Do We Do With This Jesus? A Reading of Matthew 15:21-28 through the Lens of Psychoanalytic Theory', *Pastoral Psychology* 63, no. 3 (2014): 249-63, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-013-0583-z>.

between Jesus and Bartimaeus reminds us that the core of Christian spirituality lies in the deep personal relationship between the individual and God.³⁹ Furthermore, the story demonstrates Jesus' inclusiveness and concern for the marginalised.

Runar M. Thorsteinsson argues that every teaching of Jesus contains philosophical values, including ethical significance, and that the Synoptic Gospels have particular emphases. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus focuses on the existence of God's reign and the place of human beings within it, and emphasises the motivation to share possessions with the poor.⁴⁰ According to the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus stresses the importance of kindness and love towards others.⁴¹ Luke's Gospel highlights Jesus, who commands people to bring about social and spiritual transformation, remain humble, and do favour without favouritism.⁴² On the other hand, Sookgoo Shin asserts that the Gospel of John not only explains the core of Jesus' original nature, but also emphasises the fundamental quality of human beings undergoing moral formation and improvement.⁴³ Based on this, the common ground is that all the Gospels, which contain the Good News of Jesus, are meaningful, both for sharing goodness and realising ethical life practices.

3.3. Modern Christian Practices in Indonesia

Christians believe that Jesus Christ is God who demonstrated human values, such as love and humility. Furthermore, Jesus taught that humans should forgive without limit. Realistically, it is difficult for individuals to forgive people who have wronged and hurt them too much. Nevertheless, Nicholas Wolterstorff asserts the significance of forgiveness in shaping moral culture. Jesus is the perfect example of a person who forgave and taught the commandment to forgive as a component of His more comprehensive ethic of love. Next, Wolterstorff emphasises that forgiveness opens up the opportunity for goal-building, such as reconciliation with the person who has wronged us, and forgiveness also produces other goods, such as removing anger and forgetting wrongs.⁴⁴ When forgiving is practised, humans make peace with themselves and others and then move on with life without disturbing shadows. Forgiveness is the best social value there is.

Jesus criticised the arrogant way of life and always emphasised shared social interests and care for others,⁴⁵ such as love for others, elevating the status of women, care for the marginalised, and justice.⁴⁶ In addition, Yusak B. Setyawan mentions that Jesus' existence brings about four kinds of transformation: individuals, social relations within society, social

³⁹ Eric McKimmon, '28th October: Proper 25: Mark 10: 46-52', *The Expository Times* 123, no. 12 (2012): 601, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0014524612451227c>.

⁴⁰ Thorsteinsson, *Jesus as Philosopher: The Moral Sage in the Synoptic Gospels*, 46–50.

⁴¹ Thorsteinsson, 78–101.

⁴² Thorsteinsson, 143–51.

⁴³ Sookgoo Shin, *Ethics in the Gospel of John: Discipleship as Moral Progress* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 192–97.

⁴⁴ Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'Jesus and Forgiveness', in *Jesus and Philosophy: New Essays*, ed. Paul K. Moser (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 213.

⁴⁵ Otniel Aurelius Nole and Yusak Budi Setyawan, 'Pengaruh Alkitab Terhadap Natal Dan Implikasi Realitas Bisnis Di Indonesia', *Jurnal SMART (Studi Masyarakat, Religi, Dan Tradisi)* 10, no. 1 (2024): 73–84, <https://doi.org/10.18784/smart.v10i1.2214>.

⁴⁶ Miguel A. De La Torre, *Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins*, 2nd ed. (New York: Orbis Books, 2014).

structures, and the world.⁴⁷ Interestingly, Jesus was present to emphasise inclusive social transformation. Philosophy is not only conceptual but also functional, and one can learn the practice of good virtue directly from the moral paragon, Jesus Christ.⁴⁸ As a philosopher, Jesus had a stance that amazed many. He demonstrates significant social values that are unique from others.

Jesus interacted with various segments of society, including those considered inferior or marginalised in ancient times.⁴⁹ His teachings focus on the importance of positive social relationships and treating others as friends with solidarity.⁵⁰ In this context, many people see Jesus as highly social and concerned about the needs and well-being of others. Furthermore, He displayed an existence that did not show favouritism. He did not prioritise status, identity, and power in social interactions. Furthermore, He prefers people who are humble, fair, and inclusive.

Jesus taught the importance of caring for the poor and marginalised and non-violence. In the Indonesian context, this encourages social action and service to those in need and helps to overcome social inequalities. Jesus is an example in the life of Christians and a role model for all people to build harmonious togetherness in Indonesia.⁵¹ True Christians' characteristics have faith that welcomes the presence of others with unity and treats others with a constructive embrace.⁵² The humble attitude taught by Jesus sets an example for leaders and communities not to be arrogant but to serve and listen to the voices of other subjects. In the Indonesian context, Christians remember, emulate and apply Jesus' inclusive sociability.⁵³

Given that Indonesia is a nation with a diverse population, the teachings of Jesus are relevant for Christians to apply in maintaining inclusivity. This is because Jesus lived with moderation, accepting the presence of people from diverse backgrounds. Yohanes Parihala and Busro explain that Jesus' existence was peace-orientated, and He undertook a mission that brought peace to humanity. An inclusive attitude gives rise to another important value—peace. They relate this to their national identity as Indonesians. In pluralistic Indonesia, Christians

⁴⁷ Yusak Budi Setyawan, 'The Clash of Imaginations on the Identity of the Messiah in Luke 7:18–35 in the Perspective of Harari's Theory of Imagination', *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 54, no. 2 (2024): 108–19, <https://doi.org/10.1177/01461079241252823>.

⁴⁸ Luke Timothy Johnson, 'The Jesus of the Gospels and Philosophy', in *Jesus and Philosophy: New Essays*, ed. Paul K. Moser (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 68.

⁴⁹ Miguel A. De La Torre, *Decolonizing Christianity: Becoming Badass Believers* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2021).

⁵⁰ Rebecca Todd Peters, 'Reflections on a Theology of Solidarity', *Ecumenical Review* 67, no. 2 (2015): 222–33, <https://doi.org/10.1111/erev.12155>.

⁵¹ Juliati Elisabeth Seran, 'Kepemimpinan Transformasional Yesus Sebagai Model Kepemimpinan Toleran Di Indonesia', *PASCA: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 19, no. 2 (2024): 164–76, <https://doi.org/10.46494/psc.v19i2.276>.

⁵² Paskalis Lina and Robertus Wijanarko, 'Faith In God as The Source of Goodness And Religious Moderation In Indonesia: A Christian Moral Perspective', *International Journal of Indonesian Philosophy & Theology* 3, no. 1 (2022): 40–52, <https://doi.org/10.47043/ijipth.v3i1.24>; Edison R. L. Tinambunan, 'Persaudaraan Dan Persahabatan Sosial Ensiklik Paus Fransiskus: Kontribusi Dialog Antar Agama Indonesia', *Studia Philosophica et Theologica* 22, no. 2 (2022): 279–302, <https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v22i2.462>.

⁵³ Otniel Aurelius Nole, 'Prinsip Hidup Yang Mengingat Tuhan: Studi Hermeneutik Terhadap Yakobus 4:13–17', *CARAKA: Jurnal Teologi Biblikal Dan Praktika* 4, no. 2 (2023): 326–40, <https://doi.org/10.46348/car.v4i2.223>.

should be a community that attains and promotes peace, generates positive energy for the advancement of a harmonious life, and fosters togetherness as a unified family.⁵⁴

Jesus' teaching on cross-cultural neighbourliness is undoubtedly relevant to Indonesia's cultural and religious diversity. By sharing love, people close conflicts and strengthen interpersonal relationships. That can significantly strengthen harmony and unity in the Indonesian context. Despite different beliefs, Indonesians remain united as a wealth, demonstrating solidarity for the common good.⁵⁵ The effort to accept differences without coercion reflects an inclusive attitude.⁵⁶ Thus, diversity becomes a source of beauty, which is even more profound when life is shared in harmony.

At its core, humans have always wondered why and how they are in the world. Pennington answers that the way to find a complete, meaningful, and flourishing life now comes from the existence of Jesus. Pennington then explains that the way we understand Jesus as Lord, Saviour, King, Priest, and Philosopher is by returning to the answers of the scriptures so that we understand the true meaning of being Christian and carry out our role as bearers of good news that glorifies God and brings people to Him.⁵⁷ This understanding aligns with viewing Jesus as a social philosopher who brings about transformational progress and is highly relevant as a role model for modern society in the Indonesian context.

4. Conclusion

Jesus Christ is the ultimate role model for Christians. In this sense, the Christian community emulates the nature and social actions of its God. In the Indonesian context, the Christian community should behave correctly, help people on the margins, build social relationships with strangers, and establish human values, as Jesus did. The three inclusive social actions of Jesus that Indonesian Christians should perform are unconditional love, unlimited forgiveness, and selfless humility. Therefore, Jesus's inclusive sociability must represent the Christian life in Indonesia. Furthermore, the provision of inclusive sociability based on Jesus's figure indirectly reflects religious moderation values and strengthens its implementation. Christians emulate Jesus (*Imitatio Christi*) as a social philosopher and thus contribute to inclusive participation in a pluralistic world. This research provides practical guidance for Indonesian Christians to live inclusively in interacting with the diversity of other groups in the world of social reality.

In the current era, there is always hope to create peace and harmony without conflict or social segregation. Efforts to encourage unity and coexistence need to continue in the diverse context of Indonesia through ongoing research. The discussion of Jesus' inclusive sociability,

⁵⁴ Yohanes Parihala and Busro Busro, 'Reclaiming Jesus as Source of Peace in Luke 12:49–53 through the Perspective of Religious Pluralism in an Indonesian Context', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 76, no. 4 (2020): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i4.6088>.

⁵⁵ Han, Sukanto, and Pramono, 'Solidarity in Christianity to Foster "Bhineka Tunggal Ika": A Biblical Analysis of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25–37'.

⁵⁶ Christian Siregar, 'Pluralism and Religious Tolerance in Indonesia: An Ethical-Theological Review Based on Christian Faith Perspectives', *Humaniora* 7, no. 3 (2016): 349–58, <https://doi.org/10.21512/humaniora.v7i3.3589>.

⁵⁷ Pennington, *Jesus the Great Philosopher: Rediscovering the Wisdom Needed for the Good Life*, 201–20.

which has been previously discovered and described, is only part of the many important passages in the Gospels. There are certainly still numerous biblical texts on the subject that have the potential to be analysed by authors using various perspectives and methods. So, the authors recommend further research exploring the inclusive sociability of Jesus, with biblical studies from various approaches, to provide more in-depth and comprehensive findings.

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