

# Truth or Tolerance?

By: George Bassilios

St Antonius Coptic Orthodox Church, San Francisco Bay Area

## I. Introduction

- ◆ Tolerance has become our society's moral standard. It has become an overrated virtue distorting its pure meaning taught by Our Lord Jesus Christ. (Mat 5:44)
- ◆ Society teaches that it is wrong to not tolerate other people's beliefs. We must accept everyone's views, beliefs, lifestyles as being "equal" to our own.
- ◆ People claim that all religions point towards the same God.... But do they really point to the same God? Let us examine this idea

## II. Do All Religions Point Towards God??

Often the analogy is used of people taking different paths up the same mountain, but all arriving at the same summit. This is the viewpoint known as religious pluralism.

Religious pluralism suggests that there are only superficial differences among the religions

Let us examine the differences between Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity, with regard to their teaching concerning **salvation**.

- Buddhism, the problem facing humanity is the suffering caused by desire. the way to peace of mind and ultimate "salvation" is through the elimination of all desire
- Islam, man's problem is his failure to live by the law of God which was revealed through His prophet. The solution is to obey God's laws hoping that our good deeds will outweigh the bad
- In Christianity, the problem is similar, our rebellion against the will of God. But the solution is much different. It is through your faith in the sacrifice of our Lord and following His Commandment

ACTS 4:10-12

***let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."***

## “Tolerance” Defined:

- ◆ “Tolerance is the rejection of all dogmatism and absolutism.”-United Nations “Declaration of Principles on Tolerance,” October 25-November 16, 1995  
This definition is contrary to the Word of God.
- ◆ The Holy Bible has very definite and detailed moral law. This law, the law of God, is dogmatic and absolute. It is black and white. This is exactly what tolerance opposes.
- ◆ There are two totally distinct definitions of tolerance: one known by the older generation, the other by the younger generation. And what is being taught to our children is totally different than what is in the mind of their parents.
- ◆ The new tolerance is called positive tolerance, which says this: **every single individual’s beliefs, values, lifestyle, and truth claims are equal.**” -Josh McDowell – “The New Tolerance” – October ‘98

### III. Tolerance is a Self-Defeated notion

- ◆ Tolerance claim, "there are no absolute truths". Isn't this self-contradictory? Those who argue that 'there is no truth' are putting forth that statement as true."
- ◆ There is a hypocrisy obvious in those that promote tolerance because being tolerant applies to all people except those who oppose immorality. The tolerant, then, become intolerant of Biblical morality and those that defend it.
- ◆ If you are intolerant of someone who is intolerant, then you have violated your own principle.
- ◆ This is selective tolerance, which proves that the tolerance movement is a fraud whose real purpose, as we will see, is to promote an anti-Christian agenda.

### IV. Tolerance and Opposing Views:

Here are some questions to highlight the shortcoming of this trend of Tolerance....  
Kindly ask these to whoever believes in this notions. Their answers should be revealing.

1. Do you believe in the pro-life movement?
2. Do you think that Christians should be allowed to promote sexual purity & oppose immorality?

If they oppose any one of these, point out that their lack tolerance.

**When they give reasons for their intolerance, help them realize that, while they have their reasons for being intolerant, so does God and Christians.**

## V. Is Truth Relative?

Let's see what the majority of Americans believe?

*According to Chuck Colson, "Why Christians Are Losing the Culture War, 72% of Americans believe in this statement: "There is no such thing as absolute truth; two people could define truth in totally conflicting ways, but both could still be correct."*

- ◆ The assumption that truth is relative has infiltrated almost every facet of our society:
- ◆ Truth is reduced to **personal preference**; what's true is what works for you. This may be "true for you but not for me"
- ◆ Moral Relativists condemn those who seek to impose their morality on others. Yet they, themselves, seek to impose their relativistic morality on others. Why should the moral relativist, then, complain if someone took a hammer to his car?
- ◆ **No reality is contingent upon our view of it**
- ◆ The bottom line is that Truth cannot be relative, if it is then it is not truth!
- ◆ If truth actually is relative, then so is the statement that truth is relative, and therefore it need not be believed by anyone.

### TRUTH IS:

## VI. "Truth" Defined:

There are multiple arrays of definitions of the "Truth", to share a few;

- ◆ Truth by definition is the way things really are, the true or actual state of a matter. It is conformity with fact or reality.
- ◆ For example, the sky is blue. While people may argue what shade of blue the sky is, the statement remains true. For our statements, in order to be true, **must conform to a reality that lies outside each of us**
- ◆ Truth is also consistent; not contradictory. For example, if we asked three people what  $2 + 2$  is and they come up with three **different** answers, what we may know is that at the most one is correct and the other two are wrong. Maybe even all three are wrong, but no more than one is right. Error is broad ( $2+2=5$ ,  $2+2=6$ , etc.), but the truth is narrow.

## Consequences of the Truth

- ◆ Truth will have consequences in our lives whether we believe it or not. God's existence will have consequences for us--or His non-existence, for that matter, will have consequences for us--no matter what we believe, just as the existence of some deadly gas in this room would have consequences for us regardless of what we believed about it.

## **VII. Pluralism & Relativism**

Some people think that because we live in a pluralistic society, we have to believe that all religions are equally true.

Relativism states that all truths are equal and that what is true for one person is not necessarily true for another. **Thus relativists say people should not make exclusive claims to truth.**

Point to ponder:

- ◆ People are not by nature relativists in their everyday beliefs and practices. It seems only when religion and morality are at issue that people invoke relativism.
- ◆ We don't hear people claiming that mutually exclusive statements are true when it comes to the stock market.

When are Pluralism & Relativism appropriate?

- ◆ Relativistic pluralism is appropriate only in matters of taste, not in matters of truth. In matters of truth, we are expected to search for it and cling to it and live it.

But religious relativism is not only deceptive and intolerant, it is also incoherent, Consider this

- ◆ Relativists claim that "all religious claims are relative" but that is a claim that is not relative. It fails its own test and is thus self-contradictory; and self-contradictory statements are false.
- ◆ The real question is: "Which exclusive claim is really true--Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, relativism, etc.?" And that can only be determined by an investigation into the evidence supporting the claims of each view.

## **VIII. The Exclusiveness of the Truth**

Truth by its very nature is **exclusive!** That is a very bad word today--exclusive.

By embracing one thing, it excludes everything else.

- ◆ If Jesus Christ is the "only begotten Son" of God, then that honor cannot belong to anyone else, not to Buddha, not to Mohammed

- ◆ If the Truth acknowledges one being as supreme lord, then it will reject all other contenders for the throne. That is the nature of truth.
- ◆ Christian teaching, by clinging to this idea of truth, becomes unacceptably exclusive in an inclusive world.
- ◆ Our Christian view of truth as exclusive by its very nature is simply not acceptable to a world which prefers to **invent its own comfortable truths**.
- ◆ That is why you experience hostility to your Christianity, It's threatening to the world around us
- ◆ The truth will not permit us to be inclusive. As much as you may want to be inclusive in a pluralistic world, the truth will not permit us to be inclusive.

## IX. The Christian Solution

- ◆ To this point we have examined the short-comings of this notion of tolerance and the superiority of truth. But understanding the situation is only half the battle. As Christians, we are called to action.

So how do we reach a world that is choking on its own tolerance?

1. We must **lovingly** expose the logical weaknesses in the initially attractive notion of Tolerance and speak the truth (Eph 4:15).
2. We must remind ourselves of the existence, authority and power of God's truth. We must "put on the full armor of God" as our defense against the enemy. First and foremost we are to "stand firm having girded our loins with truth." (Eph 6:14)
3. We must realize that there is a time for both tolerance and intolerance. For example, Christ associated with the sick, the poor, and the rejected.
4. Our Lord always spoke with compassion. He respected the dignity of individuals who disagreed with Him; He respected their right to choose, even to choose death if they rejected life. He did not coerce them.

But He refused to compromise the Truth He was teaching

Christianity, therefore, to the extent that it respects the dignity of all persons, is the most tolerant (in the truest meaning of the word) of all religions.

Yet as accepting as Our Lord was, He was extremely rigid about the exclusiveness of His claims. Of all the choices in life, He tells us there is only one way, one truth, and one life--His.

5. But there's one more strategy, perhaps the most important. We need to live the truth. We need to embody the truth of the our Lord and His message in our thoughts and behavior. We, as Christians, are people who "belong to the truth" (1 John 3:19). Our Father is the Truth (John 14:6) and our Mother is the pillar and ground of the truth. (1Tim 3:15).

## **X. Conclusion**

- ◆ The problem here is the fundamental attitude of the human race: that **we want to make the rules; we want to create and design our own options; we want to dictate our own terms**
- ◆ The premise of this world is that there is no God – If there is no God, there is no Absolute Truth. If there is no God, there is only the individual.... Each individual can, then, make up his own truth. We want, if we may, to construct our own reality. We don't want to be compelled to submit to a reality that lies beyond us
- ◆ We ask Our Heavenly Father to help us overcome this monstrous challenge that is rooting itself the fabric of our society. We ask Him to help us “buy the truth and do not sell it” (Pro 23:23) so that we can walk in the Truth (Ps 86:11, 3 John 1:4) as children of the Light to whom is glory forever and ever Amen.